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Creating a Pathway to a Better Financial Future: Developing State Strategies for Asset Development and Wealth Creation for People with Disabilities

by Candace Baldwin and Megan O'Neil

Dedicated economic advancement strategies — such as savings and building assets, homeownership, and entrepreneurship — are increasingly viewed as an important part of public policy efforts to give people with disabilities expanded access to the labor market. While no single program, policy, funding stream, or strategy to build assets has proven to be a universal solution for the multiple challenges encountered by low-income individuals and their families, a variety of tools and strategies are being implemented by federal, state, and local governments and communities to help lift disadvantaged wage earners — including workers with disabilities — out of poverty. This brief introduces basic asset development concepts, tools, and activities that states can use as a framework for developing comprehensive, integrated state asset development strategies for people with disabilities and their families.

Introduction

Participation in the financial mainstream is important to economic self-sufficiency and is essential to laying a foundation for people to build assets. Financial resources — such as savings accounts, homes, cars, and pensions — affect an individual's economic well-being and influence economic self-sufficiency. Unfortunately, many of the existing public asset-building policies and programs (e.g., home mortgage interest deductions, tax breaks for retirement savings, refundable state and federal tax credits, and tax incentives for higher education) are often inaccessible to or underutilized by low- and moderate-income individuals.[1] For people with disabilities, these disadvantages are compounded by current public policies that create disincentives to work[2] and a recessionary labor market that makes it hard for even the most skilled workers to find employment.

Successful asset-building strategies to date have included efforts to promote employment and increase access to financial services. Other promising approaches include short-term and emergency savings programs, long-term savings and investment strategies, and efforts to preserve current assets. A number of states and localities have fostered asset-building services using government resources through targeted policies and through coordination and collaboration efforts; however, these efforts are not always comprehensive.

A system of integrated strategies that create "asset pathways" have shown the greatest promise for low-income families.[3] To assist low-income people with disabilities in particular, states should offer work supports and asset development programs as well as better job opportunities and access to employment to ensure long-term financial independence.

The U.S. Department of Treasury's Eight Elements of a Successful Financial Education Program

The U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Financial Education, developed a list of eight elements of a successful financial education program. The primary purpose of these elements is to offer guidance to financial education organizations as they develop programs and strategies to achieve the greatest impact in their communities. Successful program elements are:

Content

1. Focuses on basic savings, credit management, home ownership, and/or retirement planning.
2. Is tailored to its target audience, taking into account its language, culture, age, and experience.

Delivery

3. Is offered through a local distribution channel that makes effective use of community resources and contacts.
4. Follows up with participants to reinforce the message and ensure that participants are able to apply the skills taught.

Impact

5. Establishes specific program goals and uses performance measures to track progress toward meeting those goals.
6. Demonstrates a positive impact on participants' attitudes, knowledge, or behavior through testing, surveys, or other objective evaluation.

Sustainability

7. Can be easily replicated on a local, regional, or national basis so as to have broad impact and sustainability
8. Is built to last as evidenced by factors such as continuing financial support, legislative backing, or integration into an established course of instruction.

For further information, visit: http://www.treas.gov.

Hallmark Asset-Building Activities and Programs

Economic assets are resources that promote financial self-sufficiency, community participation, and quality of life. Research has demonstrated that asset ownership enhances community status and well-being, influences the opportunity for future gain and the ability to transfer wealth between generations, and is associated with better health.[4] Yet, income preservation, savings, and asset development have not been traditionally associated with employment policies for people with disabilities.

To date, public asset-building programs and policies that have effectively moved individuals and families from poverty to economic self-sufficiency have not been part of a comprehensive asset pathways strategy. Instead, a disconnected range of services and programs have been made available to assist individuals in building and protecting assets. Good public policy requires the establishment of a comprehensive array of services that address financial literacy, provide easier access to mainstream financial advice, and offer opportunities for savings, investment, and long-term wealth accumulation.

McCulloch developed a visual representation of this continuum of asset-building opportunities.[5] Figure 1 displays the types of policies, programs, and initiatives that states can establish as they develop a successful, comprehensive package of asset development approaches for low-income people with disabilities. Each step reflects the underlying need for continuing financial literacy education and greater access to stable employment opportunities that increase income.

Step One: Strategies that Create Access to Mainstream Financial Services

Most working Americans understand the importance of having a safe and affordable place to deposit their paychecks, pay their bills, save for "rainy day" emergencies, and prepare for retirement. An established relationship with a financial services organization is crucial — whether it is a bank, community development financial industry organization, or credit union. Yet, as many as 22 million U.S. families — most of them earning less than $25,000 per year — are **unbanked**, meaning they lack any basic checking or savings account.[6] Additionally, the Center for Financial Services Innovation estimates the **underbanked**[7] at over 40 million households (106 million individuals).[8]

For most people today, personal financial management typically begins with savings and checking accounts, which are, more often than not, tied to an electronic debit card. From a consumer standpoint, bank accounts are an effective vehicle to safeguard funds and to save and build assets. Too often, however, low-income individuals and families choose to use non-traditional financial services such as check cashers, rapid anticipation loan businesses, and payday lenders. Research conducted by the Center for Responsible Lending indicates that payday lenders and similar services often result in the borrower paying 400% in annual interest rates.[9] Connecting low-income populations and individuals with disabilities to more mainstream financial instruments is a vital first step for better asset building.

Community Development Financial Organizations (CDFIs)

Over 750 organizations nationwide have been designated by the U.S. Department of Treasury as Community Development Financial Organizations. The unique nature of a CDFI is its focus on community outreach and addressing the financial needs of low-income and underserved communities and populations. A number of community development banks and credit unions have created financial programs directed toward the needs of people with disabilities. Since many of these organizations are mission driven, their programs are more flexible to meet the individual needs of certain populations rather than a "one-size-fits-all" as found in many larger financial institutions.

CheckSpring Community Corporation (CCC), located in the Bronx, **New York**, opened in 2007 with a mission to provide financial services to unbanked populations. CCC's goal is to create a new model of banking that combines check cashing and savings within a low-income population currently un-served by traditional financial institutions. Its purpose is to help unbanked populations to gain financial relationships and build assets by providing an alternative to sub-prime lenders and check-cashing outlets. CCC also offers check-cashing and banking services for people with disabilities (http://www.checkspring.com)

Veridian Credit Union in **Iowa** became the first financial institution in the nation to act as a fiscal agent on behalf of its members with disabilities. Veridian has a long history of providing innovative and affordable financial services to members with the greatest need. Through the Iowa Able Foundation Partnership, Veridian provides low-cost loans to members with disabilities to purchase assistive technology to improve individual independence or increase home-based or self-employment opportunities (http://www.veridiancu.org).

Figure 1. Continuum of Asset-Building Opportunities, Poverty to Economic Security

Poverty → **Economic Security**

Step 1:
Access to Mainstream Financial Services

- Affordable checking and savings accounts
- Location of bank branches in low-income communities
- Loan products with reasonable interest rates
- Low-cost remittance services
- Credit remediation
- Second chance banking programs
- Acceptance of multiple forms of identification
- Alternatives to payday loan and check cashing
- Direct Express EBT Card
- Tax filing and access to tax credits (EITC)

Step 2:
Savings Opportunities

- Individual Development Accounts
- Employer-supported savings
- Lifelong Learning Accounts
- Family Self-Sufficiency Program
- Earned Income Tax Credit
- FHLB – IDEA & WISH
- Children's Savings Accounts
- Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS Plan)
- Special Needs Trusts

Step 3:
Investment Opportunities

Home Equity
- Cooperatives
- Self-help
- Community Land Trusts
- Manufactured Housing
- Shared Equity
- Lease Purchase
- Section 8 Homeownership

Business Equity
- Micro-enterprise
- Worker-owned coops
- Employee Wealth Sharing Programs
- Resident-owned businesses

Commercial Real Estate
- Community Development initial public offering (IPO)
- Community Benefit Agreements

Step 4:
Asset Preservation Measures

- Protection from predatory lending practices
- Reform the pay day loan and check-cashing industries
- Access to affordable health insurance
- Post-purchase homeownership counseling
- Medicaid Buy-In
- Special Needs Trusts

← Financial Education/Increasing Income →

Adapted from
Building Assets while Building Communities by Heather McCulloch

Step Two: Strategies that Create Savings Opportunities

The current economic downturn has highlighted consumers' heavy reliance on credit and the failure of many American families to maintain savings accounts as part of their personal assets. Having adequate savings can have a critical impact on one's quality of life and well-being. Savings provide adequate support into retirement, serve as a safety net in the face of an unexpected income loss or expense, and can be used as collateral to leverage large purchases such as a house, investing in a small business, or accessing higher education.

Since the implementation of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 and the subsequent downturn in the national economy, a variety of strategies have been developed to enhance savings opportunities for low-income people, including passage of the Assets for Independence Act (AFI) that created the Individual Development Account (IDA) program.

IDAs are matched savings accounts designed to help low-income workers plan for and reach specific asset-building goals. In an IDA program, an eligible individual signs an agreement with a participating agency to save earned income for a specific purpose. The participant's savings are placed into a separate bank account and matched with program funds. Federally funded IDAs promote savings for any one of three targeted asset-building goals: home ownership, small business start-up, and postsecondary education. To be eligible for an IDA, an individual must be working and must be eligible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), or have household income below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. Eligible individuals or families must also have a net worth of no more than $10,000, excluding their primary residence and one motor vehicle.

Many low-income workers with a disability are simply unaware of the benefits of an IDA, although individuals with disabilities who are working part or full time and are eligible for EITC would also be eligible for an IDA. To remain eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Medicaid, there are strict resource limits. Federally funded IDAs, however, are exempt from being counted as an asset. In addition, Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries have no limits on the amount of money they can save or resources they can acquire. An IDA could be established for an SSI or SSDI beneficiary that saves income for a specific asset-building goal and have the added benefit of matching dollars to the dollars being saved from earned income. The IDA, under these circumstances, actually helps preserve eligibility for SSI benefits.

To increase savings opportunities for people with disabilities, the Office of Community Services in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is collaborating with the federal Administration on Developmental Disabilities to sponsor the AFI Family Support 360 IDA's Initiative, whereby training and technical assistance will be offered to AFI grantees nationwide, to enhance services for people with disabilities. To learn more about AFI state projects and opportunities for persons with disabilities to establish IDAs, the Office of Community Services offers a AFI Project Locator organized by state and local areas at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/assetbuilding/states.html.

Another program that encourages savings is the New Jersey-based Success of Saving (SOS) financial literacy program, established by Allies, Inc., a community rehabilitation provider with the support of the New Jersey Council on Development Disabilities. SOS empowers individuals with disabilities economically by teaching them how to budget and save earned income in a personal savings account. The program encourages saving through a combination of interactive coursework, trips to local banks, and setting a savings goal. Deposits made by program participants are matched by the SOS program. When participants have saved $500 of their earned income, it is matched by $1,000 toward the realization of their goal, upon completion of financial education classes.

Finally, workers with disabilities can also take advantage of two programs especially related to the disability population — Special Needs Trusts and the Plan for Achieving Self Support. Both initiatives provide opportunities to expand asset development through savings and protect against losing much needed public benefits during the transition period to asset development.

Special Needs Trusts vs. Pooled Special Needs Trusts

Parents of children with disabilities often face years of expensive care for their children. Financial planners often help parents provide for children with disabilities when the parents are no longer alive to provide care through Special Needs Trusts.

While **Special Needs Trusts** are a useful financial tool for parents with resources, a Special Needs Trust may be administered by a relative or friend who is appointed as trustee, which may entail little or no cost to the Trust, while a **Pooled Special Needs Trust** entails fees that must be paid out of Trust funds. However, Pooled Special Needs Trusts provide a way for individuals with disabilities to join a pooled trust and establish a sub-account for their sole benefit as a means to receive financial support for expenses not covered by other benefit programs. Funds are used for expenses not already covered by SSI or Medicaid. Funds held in trust do not affect eligibility for SSI or Medicaid. Key elements of Pooled Special Needs Trusts include:

1. A nonprofit organization as the trustee with fiduciary responsibility over the trust,
2. The trust combines the funds of multiple people with disabilities,
3. The beneficiary often receives the value of the trust in the event of beneficiary death, and
4. Funds cannot be used to cover housing expenses already covered by SSI.

Normally, a trust will be considered an available asset whenever someone applies for a means-tested public assistance program such as SSI or Medicaid. Special Needs Trusts provide an exception to the asset rule that is often applied to trust funds. A properly administered Special Needs Trust is not counted as an available asset and disbursements from the trust are not counted as income under the rules that apply to SSI and Medicaid. One of the major distinctions between Special Needs Trusts and Pooled Trusts is the federal requirement that Pooled Trusts must be established and administered by a nonprofit organization.

For more information on Special Needs Trusts and Pooled Trusts, the Center for Special Needs Trust Administration, Inc. (http://www.sntcenter.org) provides information on the types of Pooled Trusts operating in various states. For more on this initiative, the Disability Rights Washington organization has published an overview on this model, available at: http://www.disabilityrightswa.org/2009-publication-pdf/guardianships/FYI%20Special%20Needs%20Trust%20Web.pdf.

Some examples of Pooled Special Needs Trusts that expand quality of life and asset development for people with disabilities include:

1. Shared Horizons serving people with disabilities in Maryland and the District of Columbia (http://www.shared-horizons.org).
2. Enhanced Life Options serving New Hampshire (http://www.elonh.org).

Plan for Achieving Self Support (PASS)

A PASS is a way to use countable income to fund a vocational goal. Normally, countable income such as wages would reduce an SSI payment. Instead, in exchange for promising to set aside countable income to use for an approved and specified goal, the Social Security Administration will maintain or increase the SSI payment, to provide support for living expenses while the PASS is active. SSI beneficiaries may set resources aside in the PASS, as well as income. PASS applicants must use resources or income other than SSI income to pay for the goods and services they need to meet the goal. Placing resources in a PASS can enable individuals to save more without losing SSI eligibility, or to initially qualify for SSI if their resources would otherwise be too high for SSI. Allowable PASS expenses can include costs related to education that will make an individual more employable, or the cost of purchasing a car that will be used as transportation for work, among other expenses.

Because PASS is a work incentive program, it can also be used to develop start-up funds for a small business. Approved PASS plan expenses can include workforce skills training, transportation, and start-up funds for self-employment.

The PASS form may be found online at: http://www.ssa.gov/online/ssa-545.html. Local Work Incentives Planning and Assistance agencies can also assist in the development of PASS programs. To search for a community, call 1-866-968-7842 or visit https://secure.ssa.gov/apps10/oesp/providers.nsf/bystate.

States seeking to promote this incentive should consider developing an information and educational outreach program to inform workers with disabilities of this savings option. California provides a good example of an outreach campaign for the PASS program. For more information, visit: http://www.disabilitybenefits101.org/ca/programs/income_support/pass/faqs.htm.

Step Three: Strategies that Create Investment Opportunities

Asset development and wealth accumulation can be achieved through the savings initiatives described above, but for long-term sustainable economic self-sufficiency, individuals must also take part in long-term investments. Gaining equity through ownership of housing or a business as well as long-term retirement planning can provide a more stable foundation for asset growth. Many federal programs that provide asset development and tax relief are often targeted toward individual equity accumulation. People with disabilities can also take advantage of these asset-building tools, which include home mortgage interest deductions, tax breaks for retirement savings, preferential treatment of capital gains, and tax incentives for higher education. Even people with limited incomes can participate in investment strategies, the most common being homeownership.

Homeownership has traditionally been out of reach for many low-income workers. A number of federal and state affordable housing programs, however, provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities to gain equity. Financial literacy programs and savings programs, like IDA, provide assistance for low-wage earners to save for homeownership while educating them on what it means to be a homeowner. Individuals that possess Housing Choice Vouchers (also known as Section 8 rental vouchers) can use them to supplement mortgage payments through the Section 8 homeownership program.

Co-op Initiatives, Connecticut

Co-op Initiatives is a nonprofit housing developer that creates permanently affordable housing in suburban communities in Connecticut. The organization's mission is to develop affordable housing for families with low-to-moderate incomes and to pioneer in the creation of new independent living options for people with disabilities. In addition to developing cooperatives, the organization assists people with disabilities in planning and obtaining the support they will need to live in homes of their own. For more information on Co-op Initiatives, contact (203) 724-4940.

Homeownership for Individuals with Disabilities
State of Maryland

The Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development administers a loan program to provide access to affordable homeownership for people with disabilities. Eligible borrowers or a child of the borrower must have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more activities of daily living. The program provides connection to homeownership counseling and takes into consideration non-taxable income of the borrowers in an effort to help people who receive public benefits to qualify for mortgages. The program offers very low interest rates, extended mortgage terms, no down payment requirement, very little due at settlement, and flexible credit requirements. For more information, visit: http://www.dhcd.state.md.us/Website/programs/hidp/hidp.aspx.

While traditional ownership strategies include single-family home purchasing, a number of cooperative and shared equity tools also can be employed to provide access for lower-income populations to realize the American Dream. Cooperative housing, which is owned and controlled by residents, often provides significant savings over physically comparable rental or single-family housing, for example. Typically found in multi-family dwellings, housing cooperatives provide an opportunity for individuals to own a share of the cooperative corporation. This structure provides an opportunity for community living and equity investment, while providing a safety net for home maintenance and repair, which are often costly side effects of owning a home.

Additionally, investment in small business and microenterprise opportunities can also be an effective long-term investment strategy while creating employment for workers with disabilities. Often people with disabilities face barriers to the start-up of small business ventures, the most common obstacle being a lack of start-up capital. By creatively employing savings through the IDA and PASS programs, coupled with the entrepreneurship training offered through such avenues as the state Vocational Rehabilitation program, the state Workforce Investment program, or the federal Ticket to Work program, states can help people with disabilities invest in their own economic self-sufficiency.

Step Four: Strategies that Preserve Assets

Helping individuals with and without disabilities to maintain important benefits while transitioning toward financial independence through employment and asset building is a major challenge for states. States may want to consider employing strategies that provide incentives to acquiring assets and employment as well as reducing long-term dependency on public benefits. Two important strategies are services that explain work incentives such as benefits planners and services that provide transitional health benefits.

For a person with a disability who is working or thinking about working, a benefits planner can help them understand how to manage their assets and keep their benefits while transitioning toward economic self-sufficiency. Benefit planning programs and counselors can help workers with disabilities learn how to adjust to sustainable benefits levels while they accumulate assets through work and savings. By integrating work incentive programs with benefits counseling, workers with disabilities can be better informed on how to use their benefits as a bridge to achieving economic self-sufficiency.

For persons with a disability, ensuring that they have health coverage is vitally important to their decision to work or not work. Since 1997, states have had the option to provide health benefits through the Medicaid program to workers with disabilities whose earnings are too high for them to qualify for Medicaid under other eligibility categories. States can choose to cover:

1. Working individuals with disabilities age 16-65 based on income and resource limits set by the state, **and**
2. Working individuals with disabilities who meet the definition of "disabled" under the Social Security Act and would be eligible for SSI payments if it were not for their earnings, **or**
3. Employed individuals covered under the group described above, who lose that coverage due to medical improvements, but who still have a medically determinable severe impairment.

Forty-four states have implemented Medicaid Buy-In programs.[10] States, such as **Iowa**, have published online resource guides about the various Medicaid Infrastructure Grant initiatives available in their states, including their Buy-In programs. For more information, visit: http://www.disability.law.uiowa.edu/lhpdc/rrtc/mig/.

Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWICs)

CWICs are a nationwide resource designed to guide individuals and families through the complex choices required to attain employment and wealth, while receiving Social Security Disability or SSI benefits.

CWICs operate through a state's Work Incentives Planning and Assistance organization, and can assist in determining eligibility, applying for and coordinating work incentives, and in advising individuals and families on how best to maintain Medicaid benefits while working and building assets.

Given the complexity and variety of the Social Security Administration's work incentives, contact with a local CWIC is an almost necessary element of a career search and asset-building strategy for a recipient of Social Security Disability or SSI benefits.

CWICs exist in every state and territory nationwide. The services are free, and may be accessed by anyone aged 16 to 64 who is receiving Social Security Disability or SSI benefits and who is either working or interested in working.

Next Steps for States: Initiating Comprehensive, Innovative, and Integrated Asset-Building and Employment Solutions

As illustrated in this brief, a number of asset-building initiatives can be developed and deployed by states that would result in a comprehensive strategy designed to help people with disabilities build financial resources on the foundation of work. These programs can be part of a state's overall strategy to expand asset development to support employment for a broad array of low- to moderate-income individuals, including people with disabilities.

As with many programs offered through multiple state and federal agencies, it is often a challenge to ensure that state asset development initiatives come together in an integrated way to bring about meaningful change. Linking new asset-building strategies to efforts to expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities requires a review of multiple regulations and policies to ensure that important barriers are removed. In order to achieve success, several elements must be taken into consideration.

First, effective integration of asset development and employment strategies requires cross-agency conversations and partnerships among a multitude of stakeholders, including state policymakers, financial institutions, community organizations, employers, and consumers.[11] **Preservation of benefits through regulation** coupled with **outreach to people with disabilities** will help to break down barriers and disincentives. As the financial service industry diversifies and expands to serve new markets, people with disabilities are being increasingly recognized as an emerging market. The National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions has developed a national work committee with aggressive outreach in order to bring disability awareness and financial services to its national network of more than 230 credit unions.[12] These credit unions understand that unbanked people with disabilities represent a huge market segment and promoting their economic well-being is not just a kind act of charity — it makes excellent business sense.

Second, promoting and developing asset building requires the **investment of sufficient federal, state, and local resources** to implement and sustain these programs. For example, state policies and procedures shape many states' Medicaid Buy-In programs' income and asset eligibility criteria, as well as how the Medicaid Buy-In programs relate to other work incentive and employment programs in a state. States may eliminate resource (asset) limits for some public benefits, or increase the resource limits for these programs, to promote asset development by beneficaries. States also have the option of adding or supplementing national or local asset-building initiatives by instituting a state EITC; establishing Medicaid Buy-In programs; initiating state IDA and other matched savings programs for college, medical expenses, or retirement; enacting legislation that protects consumers against predatory lending or credit scams; or establishing resources and policies that support small and micro-business development as well as homeownership programs and trusts. In the area of asset building, working to develop complementary public policies that help a wide range of people (e.g., low-to moderate-income, individuals with disabilities, welfare recipients) that are also integrated with employment strategies is important to developing a long-term, universal, and sustainable system of services.[13]

Third, it is important to **educate service providers and people with disabilities and their families about available asset development programs,** including tax preparation, tax filing, and federal and state tax credits. Too often, local benefits counselors focus exclusively on how workers with disabilities can protect their benefits. While this is indeed an important service in the short term, training counselors should also help workers with disabilities work toward long-term financial independence in order to reduce dependency on public benefits, understand their long-term financial needs, as well as how to access the innovative strategies mentioned in this brief. It is also important to adopt a process that routinely educates and trains frontline workforce professionals and benefits counselors about the availability of asset development programs and how to access them. Supporting long-term employment is another key element in any comprehensive statewide asset development strategy.

Finally, **integrating asset development strategies in tandem with employer marketing and outreach initiatives** will also most likely yield a more sustainable result. Employer-sponsored asset development opportunities include promoting the use of electronic debit cards in lieu of paper payroll checks, creating pre-tax savings deductions for homeownership, and offering financial literacy education as part of the employee benefits package. These employer initiatives have the effect of reinforcing publicly sponsored strategies and other local efforts to help people with disabilities achieve economic self-sufficiency and employment.

Useful Resources

A great deal of information on asset development and asset building is available. Outlined below are some helpful sources to learn more about asset-building and development strategies for people with disabilities.

U.S. Department of Labor/Office of Disability Employment Policy, http://www.dol.gov/odep

National Disability Institute, http://www.ndi-inc.org

World Institute on Disability, http://www.wid.org

Institute on Assets and Social Policy, http://www.iasp.brandeis.edu

Financial Literacy Programs

FDIC - Money Smart, toll-free: 1(877) ASKFDIC, TTY: 1(800) 925-4618, http://www.fdic.gov/consumers/consumer/moneysmart/

America Saves, (202) 387-6121, http://www.americasaves.org/

Success of Saving, program in New Jersey for individuals with significant disabilities, http://www.alliesnj.org/services13.htm

IDA and EITC Programs

IRS, marketing and outreach to individuals with disabilities through community partnerships nationwide, http://www.irs-eitc.info/SPEC/

TAXfacts+ Campaign/Real Economic Impact Tour, http://www.reitour.org

National Research and Training Center on Psychiatric Disability, University of Illinois at Chicago, http://www.cmhsrp.uic.edu/nrtc/

Cooperative and Shared Equity Homeownership

Housing Associations and Cooperatives, http://thechp.syr.edu/hcoops.htm

Guidebook to Consumer Controlled Housing: Developed for Minnesotans with Developmental Disabilities, http://rtc.umn.edu/guide/

Understanding Public Benefits

Medicaid Buy-In for Working People with Disabilities, http://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/wi/buyin.htm

State Resource Guide for Medicaid Buy-in Programs, http://disability.law.uiowa.edu/lhpdc/rrtc/mig/

Understanding General Asset Development Strategies for People with Disabilities

National Consortium for Health Systems Development, http://www.nchsd.org

Asset-Building Background Brief on Understanding Asset-Building Strategies for People with Disabilities – Background for Medicaid Infrastructure Grants, http://www.nchsd.org/libraryfiles/AssetDevelopment/AssetBuildingPolicyBrief072506.pdf

Asset Development for People with Disabilities: A Conceptual Framework, http://www.nchsd.org/libraryfiles/AssetDevelopment/Asset%20Development%20Paper%20July07.pdf

Finding Funding

A Guide to Federal Sources for Asset-Building Initiatives, http://www.financeproject.org/publications/FindingFunding_AssetBuildingInititatives.pdf

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7. For the purposes of this brief, **underbanked** is defined as "may have current checking account and/or current savings account if individual made one or more non-bank financial transactions in the past 30 days." **Unbanked** is defined as "no current checking account and no current savings account."

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John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development

The John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, based at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is a dynamic research and policy center devoted to strengthening the nation's workforce. It is one of the nation's leading university-based centers devoted to helping America's workers and employers respond to a rapidly changing 21st Century economy.

The Center's motto —"Solutions at Work"— reflects its commitment to offering practical solutions, based on independent research, that benefit employers, workers, and job seekers. The Center's policy recommendations and programs serve a wide range of Americans at all skill levels.

Learn more about the Heldrich Center at *http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu*.

Kessler Foundation's fundamental strategy is to link science and grantsmanship so that people with disabilities can lead more productive, independent, and fulfilling lives. Kessler Foundation Research Center conducts research that improves quality of life for persons with injuries of the spinal cord and brain, stroke, multiple sclerosis, and other chronic neurological and orthopedic conditions. Although individuals living with disabilities represent the largest minority group seeking employment in today's marketplace, they are often not considered an integral component of corporate diversity programs. Through its strategic focus on employment, Kessler Foundation has invested more than $18 million since 2005 in organizations that work to create job opportunities through development, placement employer education, and social enterprise. This funding has enabled people with disabilities to overcome the obstacles that often face them and meet the workforce needs of American business. Innovative grantmaking has introduced creative solutions to help eliminate some of the barriers that prevent people with disabilities from working.

Learn more about the Kessler Foundation at *http://www.kesslerfoundation.org*.

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