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LISC Cleveland Commits \$1.2 Million to Launch Financial Opportunity Centers (FOC) Network to Support Economic Recovery for Under- and Unemployed Residents

CLEVELAND (July 15, 2021) – The Local Initiatives Support Corporation, with grant support from the Cleveland Foundation, is pleased to announce the launch of a new Financial Opportunity Center® (FOC) network in Greater Cleveland that will connect unemployed and underemployed residents to quality jobs and financial resources to aid in economic recovery and advance financial stability for residents.

“A thriving community is one that offers its residents opportunities for income and career growth—and the confidence that their neighborhood can enrich their lives. LISC Cleveland is grateful to the Cleveland Foundation for investing resources to support Cleveland residents on the path to debt reduction, credit building, securing quality jobs with good wages and benefits, and overall long-term financial stability,” said Kandis Williams, LISC Cleveland Executive Director.

LISC will provide three local nonprofit partners with financial support through operating grants, technical assistance and training, a shared data system for program management and evaluation, and ongoing peer learning through a national network of over 130 partner sites. Services provided through the FOC initiative will help residents increase their incomes, improve credit, and build long-term wealth for their family. The cornerstone of the FOC model is providing integrated services, with a long-term commitment to helping clients reach their goals, while simultaneously narrowing racial wealth gaps.

LISC Cleveland’s ability to bring the national FOC network in Cleveland is due in part to the support of the Cleveland Foundation, which has made a \$3 million, 3-year commitment to the launch and scale of this initiative. “The correlation between culture and finance is inarguable,” said Keisha Gonzalez, Cleveland Foundation Program Director, Economic and Community Development & Social Impact Investing, “Nationally, LISC’s Financial Opportunity Centers have demonstrated the importance of cultural competency in effective counseling for financially vulnerable and BIPOC households. This respect for and understanding of cultural differences is the linchpin for building trust between clients and coaches.”

Three local nonprofit grantees were selected as LISC's initial FOC partners in Cleveland for their record of accomplishment of success and service to their communities, as well as their capacity to offer workforce development, financial coaching, and public benefits access services in a

location accessible to residents of under-invested communities. LISC is proud to partner with the following organizations:

- The May Dugan Center
- The Urban League of Greater Cleveland
- Towards Employment

The LISC FOC model was developed in 2005 in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and is active today in over 130 program sites across the country. Results from this integrated services model speak for themselves: clients who use integrated services are over 50 percent more likely to land a well-paying job than people receiving employment services alone.

“For the past 53 years, the May Dugan Center has been helping people enrich and advance their lives and communities”, said Rick Kemm, Executive Director. “We are so grateful for the support provided by the local LISC office, to establish a Financial Opportunity Center that will enable us to expand our workforce development programming. The FOC will provide the necessary tools that we need to prepare individuals to find jobs with livable wages and meet their financial goals.”

“We are privileged to partner with LISC and provide FOC services to members of our community who can benefit from financial and employment coaching”, said Marsha Mockabee, President/CEO. “The Urban League of Greater Cleveland has operated an extremely successful workforce development program for several years. Now, with the addition of a Financial Opportunity Center, we are positioned to offer our community more comprehensive support including – workforce development, financial coaching, and public benefits access. We are so excited to provide these free services to residents throughout Cuyahoga County and help them achieve their financial goals.”

“We are excited to bring the additional focus on financial coaching to Towards Employment participants, said Jill Rizika, Executive Director. “The opportunity to have a full-time financial coach who can provide individualized coaching that evolves as a graduate progresses along their career pathway is a game changer.”

The FOC network officially launched in April 2022, and sites are currently receiving intensive training to incorporate the program model into their organization’s current practices. Trainings will address client interaction and retention, further develop staff capabilities around financial and employment coaching, and assist the organizations in improving data collection and management. By August, LISC expects all three sites to be fully integrated with the model. Later this year, LISC will host an open house to celebrate the launch of the Cleveland FOC network.

For information to include how you can engage with the LISC Cleveland FOC Network, please contact Program Officer, [Walter Morris](#).

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[Local Initiatives Support Corporation \(LISC\)](#) is the nation’s largest community development organization, helping forge vibrant, resilient communities across America. We work with residents and partners to close systemic gaps in health, wealth and opportunity and advance racial equity so that people and local economies can thrive. Since 1979, LISC has invested \$24 billion and leveraged \$69 billion to create more than 436,320 affordable homes and apartments, as well as develop 74.4 million square feet of commercial/retail, community and educational space. For more, visit www.lisc.org.

The Mission of the May Dugan Center is to help people enrich and advance their lives and communities. The Near West Side Multi-Service Corporation was established in 1969, and in 1974, the current facility was built on Bridge Avenue in the Ohio City community. It was named the May Dugan Multi-Service Center as a tribute to May Dugan and her lifetime work as a one-person counselor and advocate for her neighbors in need. The May Dugan Center provides comprehensive services and programs to individuals and families throughout the Near Westside of Cleveland and surrounding communities. May Dugan Center is here to help with various services, including Basic Needs, Maternal Health, Behavioral Health Counseling, Adult Education Resources, Victim Services, Trauma Counseling, and Senior Services.

The Urban League of Greater Cleveland is a community-based organization whose mission is to enable African Americans and other minorities to develop and realize their potential through education, research, advocacy, and provision of services. The Urban League's work is focused in the following areas: Economic Empowerment, Education and Youth, Workforce Development, and is undergirded by Civil Rights and Racial Justice. For more information on the Urban League of Greater Cleveland, visit <https://www.ulcleveland.org>, or call 216-622-0999.

At Towards Employment, we believe that everyone deserves an opportunity to thrive—not just survive— and that access to family sustaining employment is a key ingredient to achieve this goal. TE connects people to careers, and businesses to talent. We change people's lives, advance business, and strengthen community in NEO. In addition, we help translate lessons from the field into policy and system change initiatives that promote economic mobility for all.