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Integrating Financial Education Programs into American Job Centers and Community-Based Organizations

Strategies and Tips



National Disability Institute □

Washington, DC

2016 (Last updated 2018)

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Acknowledgements



This toolkit was developed by National Disability Institute's Training and Technical Assistance Team.

National Disability Institute is a national research and development organization with the mission to promote economic stability and financial capability for persons with disabilities and to build a better economic future as part of inclusive communities.

National Disability Institute's Real Economic Impact (REI) Network is comprised of an alliance of organizations and individuals dedicated to advancing the economic empowerment of people with disabilities. The network consists of more than 4,500 partners in all 50 states.

Members include non-profits, community tax coalitions, asset development organizations, financial education initiatives, corporations and private-sector businesses, federal/state/local governments and agencies, and individuals and families with disabilities. All partners join forces to embrace, promote, pursue access to and the inclusion of people with disabilities in the economic mainstream.

To learn more about how to make a Real Economic Impact, join us:

www.realeconomicimpact.org



National Disability Institute would like to thank Wells Fargo for their support of the *Integrating Financial Education Programs into American Job Centers and Community-Based Organizations Toolkit*.

National Disability Institute would also like to thank members of the Real Economic Impact Network and workforce development professionals for their feedback and suggestions on the development of this toolkit.

Summary

Financial education is an important strategy for an individual to build financial stability. It provides the knowledge and skills individuals need to manage their money and enhance their economic status. Within workforce development programs, financial education enhances employment outcomes and leads to greater educational attainment. Individuals stay at their jobs longer when they have these additional skills to effectively manage their money. As workforce development professionals, it is helpful when we create a paradigm shift in realizing that employment is one goal, but not the only goal. The ultimate goal for the job seeker is financial stability.

Financial education for job seekers is an important component of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), signed into law by President Barack Obama on July 22, 2014. WIOA reiterates the important role of American Job Centers in promoting program coordination and alignment of services related to employment, education, training, and the provision of financial education at the Federal, State, local, and regional levels.

As part of the WIOA, youth with disabilities will receive extensive pre-employment transition services so they can successfully obtain competitive integrated employment. Guidance is also provided to the states regarding the funding of financial education and financial capability programs. Financial literacy is a required program element for youth in WIOA and a service that is encouraged within WIOA adult programs. Financial literacy activities that support non-English speaking clients are also recommended.

FINANCIAL LITERACY WITHIN WIOA SUPPORTS INDIVIDUALS AS THEY:

- **create household budgets, initiate savings plans, and make informed financial decisions** about education, retirement, home ownership, wealth building, or other savings goals;
- **manage spending, credit and debt**, including credit card debt, effectively;
- **understand the availability and significance of credit reports and credit scores** in obtaining credit, including determining their accuracy (and how to correct inaccuracies in the reports and scores), and their effect on credit terms; and
- **understand, evaluate, and compare financial products, services, and opportunities.**

Steps toward integrating financial education programs into existing workforce development programs can be as simple as providing a link to financial education tools in the resource room for job seekers. A more formal initiative would include the completion of online courses by creating a financial education program within job readiness programs. This toolkit will provide you with a variety of strategies on how to effectively incorporate financial education programs within your service delivery model.

This toolkit will serve as a guide to understanding financial education, identify financial education programs for consideration, provide tips and tools on how to embed financial education into existing workforce development programs, and will provide additional resources to support continued learning.

Introduction

As workforce development professionals, the goal is to assist individuals obtain employment that produces sufficient income to provide for the management of daily living expenses and to save for the future. The ultimate goal is to help individuals achieve financial stability. To better understand the connection and pathway to financial stability, the following diagram identifies this path.



Financial Education

Financial Education is the knowledge of how to manage finances.

Financial education provides the knowledge and skills an individual needs to effectively manage one's money. Financial education topics include the following:

- Setting financial goals;
- Identifying income vs. expenses;
- Planning and maintaining a household spending plan;
- Managing checking and savings services;
- Developing and maintaining good credit;
- Identifying needs over wants;
- Avoiding money traps and recognizing predatory lending practices;
- Engaging in asset development;
- Comparing financial products and services.

Financial education is about learning what goes into earning, keeping, and growing money. Financial education is also about learning what goes into managing money and ways to avoid debt traps and unnecessary expenditures. Financial education is about learning what goes into earning, keeping and growing money. Financial education is also about learning what goes into managing money and ways to avoid debt traps and unnecessary expenditures.

Financial Capability

Financial Capability is the positive action to make informed decisions.

Financial Capability is defined as a combination of knowledge and skills to inform financial decisions and behaviors, identify opportunities to improve financial stability, and manage financial resources effectively.

Financial capability is about applying the knowledge and skills to make informed decisions when it comes to one's finances. For example, an individual may learn how to balance a checkbook in a financial education class. When the individual applies that information on a regular basis, they are turning that knowledge into a positive action, building their financial capability. By performing this positive behavior, the individual, potentially, will have a better understanding of the amount of money they have to spend and take action to reduce banking fees, such as overdraft fees.

Financial education helps individuals know what options are best as they take steps to achieve their goals. Wise decision making demonstrates financial capability.

Financial Stability

Financial Stability is the outcome of combining the knowledge and actions to make positive financial decisions.

Financial stability is the ultimate goal of financial education and financial capability. Being financially stable means having the financial resources to cover day-to-day living expenses, save for emergencies and for the future, and to be able to successfully manage an unexpected financial shock.

For individuals, financial stability produces an improved economic future, increased long-term planning, greater educational attainment and increased civic engagement.

Financial Education Tools and Resources

OVERVIEW OF HANDS ON BANKING

Hands on Banking®/El futuro en tus manos® (www.handsonbanking.org/ndi) is a free, fun, non-commercial financial education program available in both English and Spanish that teaches people, in all stages of life, about the basics of responsible money management, including how to create a budget, save and invest, borrow responsibly, buy a home, and establish a small business.

Program Highlights

- Available online with printed instructor guides;
- Courses for kids, teens, young adults, and adults;
- Financial fundamentals for entrepreneurs;
- Personal finance lessons for members of the military, seniors, and their families;
- Resources for individuals, educators, non-profits, and workplace;
- Available in English and Spanish;
- Designed for individual or classroom learning;
- Aligns with state and national education standards for mathematics, reading, and economics;
- Free, non-commercial content;
- Animated, interactive, and entertaining; and
- Easy to navigate and fun to present.

Hands on Banking offers flexibility in the ways information can be delivered in the American Job Centers. The program includes individual resources and instructor guides that provide detailed information on content, activities, and tips on how to deliver the information.

Hands on Banking can be offered as a workshop or job seekers can access the online program, courses and more at www.handsonbanking.org/ndi.



Steps to Creating a Financial Education Program

STEP 1

Create an understanding of why financial education is important for job seekers.

Creating an understanding on the importance of financial education is the first step to creating a financial education program within your center. It is important that job center staff understand the importance of financial education, the positive impact it has in supporting job seekers and how it enhances employment outcomes. Within workforce development programs, financial education enhances employment outcomes, leads to greater educational attainment, and has shown that individuals stay at their jobs longer when they have these additional skills on how to effectively manage their money. Financial education provides individuals information on the resources and tools they need to build a financially fit future. During this step, it is important to engage job center leadership and other staff to support the efforts.

STEP 2

Identify opportunities to provide financial education for job seekers.

Identifying opportunities to provide financial education is an important initial step to meeting job seekers' needs. Each job center has a different customer flow, space, and capacity. For example, if a job center has a large resource room with multiple computers, offering online financial education classes might be a good fit for the center. Individuals can access the financial education classes online at their leisure. If a job center offers job readiness workshops, offering a financial education program within the workshop series could be an easy addition. It is important to take the following into consideration when determining how to offer your financial education program.

Questions to consider:

- Can my resource room accommodate a job seeker taking a 30-60 minute financial education course online?
- Is there flexibility in offering financial education as part of the job readiness workshops?
- Will staff provide the training or will an outside partner provide workshops?
- Does the job center have the space to offer a monthly financial education workshop?

As you identify opportunities to provide financial education to job seekers, it is important to make sure that the planned offerings of financial education are fully accessible for everyone. NDI has created the Creating an Inclusive Environment for Your Financial Education Program checklist to assist in making sure your program is accessible. Appendix A includes a copy of the checklist.

STEP
3

Choose the right financial education program for your center.

Once you have identified opportunities to include financial education within your site's customer flow, it is important to review the various programs that are available. It will be important to ask yourself a few questions before selecting the final curriculum.

- How much time do I have available to teach the information?
- Are there outside partners who could provide the financial education classes?
- Does the curriculum offer flexibility?
- Can I adapt it to fit my audience's needs?
- Is the curriculum accessible?

Hands on Banking® offers a great deal of flexibility that accommodates a variety of delivery models. *Hands on Banking* is available online and printed instructor guides can be used in workshop settings.

STEP
4

Create marketing materials that are relevant to the audience.

Marketing the financial education classes is key to increasing job seekers' attendance. Often times, when starting out, job centers are discouraged with the low turn-out rate of the initial financial education class. This can be attributed to a variety of things, including the messaging in promotional materials. Using key words/phrases like "Money Management Workshop" instead of "Financial Education Workshop" has a greater impact. Additionally, using phrases like "Stretching that Dollar" or "Cash Course" or "Money Matters" have been effective titles that have helped stir interest.

STEP
5

Host an in-service training for job center staff.

Prior to offering your first financial education class, it is important to educate the entire job center staff on the financial education program. This is key, as it will assist in cross referrals to the financial education program (either online or in person). This will also allow staff to be educated on the importance of financial education and its relevance to all customers of the job center.

STEP
6

Have fun and be creative!

The final step is the most important. Have fun and be creative. It is important to remember that people use financial education skills every day when they balance their checkbooks, pay bills, make weekly grocery lists, etc. The most important part of incorporating a financial education program is to take steps to ensure that the workshop is fun and interactive.

Tips on how to start the conversation with customers

Workforce development professionals might find it uncomfortable to discuss money with customers. Customers may feel uncomfortable having those conversations as well. To make this conversation easier, job centers can enhance their intake process to include one or more of the following questions to identify the need for financial stability supports and services:

- Do you have a financial goal?
- Do you have a bank account?
- Have you created a spending plan?
- Are you able to pay your present bills?
- Do you have reliable transportation?
- Do you have safe housing?
- Do you want information about opportunities to help you reach your goals?
- Do you know your credit score?
- Are you aware of free tax preparation services?
- How far have you gone in terms of your education? Do you need more training?

These questions added to an intake form can assist in starting the conversation. These questions will help to identify any potential barriers to the individual obtaining and keeping their job.

The following are examples of opportunities to have conversations with job seekers about financial education.

Example 1

John is a job seeker and does not have a bank account. John has been referred to a job that requires direct deposit. John meets the qualifications of the job and gets the job, but as he goes through the pre-employment process, the employer shares that all employees must have direct deposit. John cannot get a bank account due to poor credit. By knowing this in advance, the job specialist can refer John to a financial education class to learn more about banking and can also refer John to a pre-paid debit card provider where he can have direct deposit and ultimately get that job by eliminating that barrier to employment.

Example 2

Samuel identified transportation as a barrier to employment. As a job specialist, it is important to explore why transportation is a barrier. Is it that John does not have a car, gas money, or that he does not have a license? John shares that he has a car but no gas money. John might be referred to a program that can provide him with a gas card, but more importantly, this opportunity also opens the door to discuss a spending plan with John and to refer him to a financial education workshop.

Example 3

Christina shared that her financial goal is to make sure that she has food on the table each night for her children. Food insecurity is a barrier for her. Christina could be referred to the SNAP and food pantry program. This is also an opportunity to discuss a spending plan with Christina and to provide her with a menu planning worksheet and shopping list or to a couponing workshop to learn strategies on how to stretch her grocery budget.

Example 4

Josephine shared that she filed for bankruptcy in 2009 during the economic downturn. This is a barrier for employment for her. As a job specialist, Josephine might be referred to the Federal Bonding Program that can provide insurance to her future employer so she can get the job. Josephine could also be referred to the financial education workshops to learn about debt management and credit, and to create a spending plan.

Conclusion

Financial education is a key strategy to help individuals build a life of work, savings, and asset development. Financial education provides individuals with the knowledge and skills they need. Integrating financial education within workforce development programs can be as simple as directing individuals to a resource/tool, encouraging them to access an online financial education program, or referring them to a financial education workshop. Starting a financial education program with the job centers can be simplified by following the six steps identified in this toolkit. These six steps can make a real economic impact for job seekers and staff of the job center.

Resources

National Disability Institute's Real Economic Impact (REI) Network

NDI's REI Network captures the power of collaboration among public and private partners with more than 4,500 organizations and individuals across America who are committed to embedding disability inclusive practices to advance economic empowerment and financial capability for all people with disabilities.

www.realeconomicimpact.org

National Disability Institute's Webinar Archive

NDI provides webinars on a variety of topics each month. These webinars are free and are archived for ease of access. Topics include Integrated Services, Financial Education, Public Benefits Planning, and a variety of other topics. To view the webinar archives, go to:

www.realeconomicimpact.org/resources/webinars

LEAD Center

The LEAD Center is a collaborative of disability, workforce, and economic empowerment organizations dedicated to one single mission: advancing sustainable individual and systems level change to improve competitive, integrated employment and economic self-sufficiency for all people across the spectrum of disability.

www.leadcenter.org/economic-advancement

Report: Banking Status and Financial Behaviors of Adults with Disabilities

Findings from the FDIC National Survey of Unbanked and Underbanked Households

<https://www.realeconomicimpact.org/pages/banking-status-and-financial-behaviors-report-release>

Report: Financial Capability of Adults with Disabilities

Findings from the FINRA Investor Education Foundation National Financial Capability Study

<https://www.realeconomicimpact.org/pages/finra-2017>



Appendix A

Creating an Inclusive Environment for Your Financial Education Program

The following checklist will help your organization remove barriers to participation by individuals with disabilities and create an inclusive environment. Creating an inclusive environment starts with the actions and attitudes of staff that set high expectations about a barrier free environment that encourages everyone to be sensitive and solution oriented to individual differences.

Self-Evaluation Checklist

Spirit of Inclusion

- 1. Are participants with disabilities treated as full participants in the classroom?
- 2. Are the expectations for participants with disabilities the same as for other participants?
- 3. Are staff using “people first language” and focusing attention on abilities, interests, and aspirations in the same way as for other participants?
- 4. Have staffed participated in a disability awareness training course?

Remove Physical Barriers

- 1. Is there an action plan to remove physical barriers in place?
- 2. Do the plans consider relocating to space without physical barriers?
- 3. Do the plans consider reorganizing space?
- 4. Do all events take place in barrier free locations?
- 5. Is the location on an accessible bus route or reachable by other accessible means of transportation?
- 6. Are the bathrooms accessible?

Remove Communications Barriers

- 1. Are staff familiar with and making available different kinds of alternative formats for materials?
 - a. Large print
 - b. CD
 - c. Audio Tape
 - d. Braille



- 2. Do program staff know how and where to secure interpreters, assistive listening devices, or real time captioning?
- 3. Are participants asked about their needs and preference for communication access?
- 4. Are staff and participants familiar with program procedures to handle requests for accommodations?
- 5. Is your website accessible for persons with disabilities?
- 6. Do you use visual information (words, charts, and graphics) to reinforce what is presented orally?

Remove Program Barriers

- 1. Do you let participants have additional time to complete assignments or take a test?
- 2. Do you offer the participant an aide, volunteer, or flexibility to bring a friend or family member to help maintain attention and understanding?
- 3. Do you offer follow up instruction, individually, as needed?
- 4. Do you provide a balance of active and passive activities within a lesson?
- 5. Do you use real life examples and concrete materials whenever possible?
- 6. Do you provide an overview of the content or expected learning objectives at the beginning of the session?
- 7. Do you repeat, paraphrase, and summarize all important points?
- 8. Do you encourage participants to ask questions?
- 9. Do you limit lectures and encourage participants to work in pairs or small teams to learn by doing?
- 10. Do you use hands on activities, pictures, or diagrams to provide alternative ways of learning abstract or more complex concepts?

Utilize Community Resources

- 1. Have you developed relationships with community disability organizations to learn more about removing physical, communication, or program barriers?
- 2. Have you asked leaders with disabilities in your community to either identify resources or help provide reasonable accommodations?
- 3. Have you invited the leaders or community disability organization staff to assess your barrier free environment?
- 4. Have you invited these leaders to help train your staff to be proactive in identifying and solving accessibility challenges?



Technical Assistance Resources

The National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) has established ten regional centers to provide information, training, and technical assistance to employers, people with disabilities, and other entities with responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The centers act as a “one-stop” central, comprehensive resource on ADA issues in employment, public services, public accommodations, and communications. Each center works closely with local business, disability, governmental, rehabilitation, and other professional networks to provide ADA information and assistance. Programs vary in each region, but all centers provide the following:

- Technical Assistance
- Education and Training
- Materials Dissemination
- Information and Referral
- Public Awareness
- Local Capacity Building

Call the toll-free number: (800) 949-4232 (V/TTY) for information, materials, technical assistance, or training on the ADA. This number will automatically route your call to the Center in your region. The contact information for the ten Regional ADA Centers is listed below:

Region 1 (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont)

[New England ADA Center](#)

Institute for Human Centered Design
(formerly Adaptive Environments)
180-200 Portland Street, First floor
Boston, Massachusetts 02114
Phone: (617) 695-0085 (V/TTY)
Fax: (617) 482-8099
E-mail: adainfo@newenglandada.org
Website: <http://www.NewEnglandADA.org>

Region 2 (New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands)

[Northeast ADA Center](#)

Cornell University
201 Dolgen Hall
Ithaca, New York 14853-3901
Phone: (607) 255-6686 (Voice and TTY)
Fax: (607) 255-2763
E-mail: dbtacnortheast@cornell.edu
Website: www.dbtacnortheast.org



Region 3 (Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia)

[Mid-Atlantic ADA Center](#)

TransCen, Inc.
451 Hungerford Drive, Suite 700
Rockville, Maryland 20850
Phone: (301) 217-0124 (V/TTY)
Fax: (301) 217-0754
E-mail: adainfo@transcen.org
Website: www.adainfo.org

Region 4 (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee)

[Southeast ADA Center](#)

Project of the Burton Blatt Institute – Syracuse University
1419 Mayson Street
Atlanta, Georgia 30324
Phone: (404) 541-9001 (V/TTY)
Fax: (404) 541-9002
E-mail: sedbtacproject@law.syr.edu
Website: www.sedbtac.org

Region 5 (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin)

[Great Lakes ADA Center](#)

University of Illinois/Chicago
Department on Disability and Human Development
1640 West Roosevelt Road, Room 405
Chicago, Illinois 60608
Phone: (312) 413-1407 (V/TTY)
Fax: (312) 413-1856
Website: www.adagreatlakes.org

Region 6 (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas)

[Southwest ADA Center](#)

Independent Living Research Utilization
2323 South Shepherd Boulevard, Suite 1000
Houston, Texas 77019
Phone: (713) 520-0232 (V/TTY)
Fax: (713) 520-5785
E-mail: dlrp@ilru.org
Website: www.dlrp.org

Region 7 (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska)

[Great Plains ADA Center](#)

University of Missouri/Columbia
100 Corporate Lake Drive
Columbia, Missouri 65203
Phone: (573) 882-3600 (V/TTY)
Fax: (573) 884-4925
E-mail: brinkhoffj@missouri.edu
Website: www.gpadacenter.org

Region 8 (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming)

[Rocky Mountain ADA Center](#)

Meeting the Challenge, Inc.
3630 Sinton Road, Suite 103
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80907
Phone: (719) 444-0268 (V/TTY)
Fax: (719) 444-0269
E-mail: technicalassistance@mtc-inc.com
Website: www.adainformation.org



Region 9 (Arizona, California, Hawaii,
Nevada, Pacific Basin)

[Pacific ADA Center](#)

555 12th Street, Suite 1030
Oakland, California 94607-4046
Phone: (510) 285-5600 (V/TTY)
Fax: (510) 285-5614
E-mail: adatech@adapacific.org
Web site: www.adapacific.org

Region 10 (Alaska, Idaho, Oregon,
Washington)

[Northwest ADA Center](#)

University of Washington
6912 220th Street SW, #105
Mountlake Terrace, Washington 98043
Phone: (425) 248-2480 (V)
Fax: (425) 771-7438
E-mail: dbtacnw@u.washington.edu
Web site: www.dbtacnorthwest.org