Integrating Asset Building and Financial Capability Strategies into Subsidized Housing Programs: The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program and Beyond

A National Roundtable, hosted by Compass Working Capital

November 19, 2015
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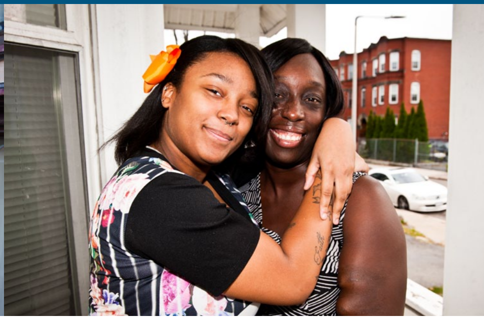

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction

On November 19, 2015, more than 65 practitioners, policymakers, advocates, and researchers gathered at a roundtable sponsored by Compass Working Capital to discuss opportunities to integrate asset building and financial capability strategies into subsidized housing programs. The roundtable focused in particular on opportunities offered by the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program – an initiative of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) designed to help residents of subsidized housing increase their earnings and build savings. The roundtable also considered a broader set of opportunities, including the possibility of modifying the basic model of subsidized housing to build in regular, automatic savings for all housing subsidy participants.

This report summarizes the broad themes discussed at the roundtable and captures a set of next steps for moving forward a common agenda designed to maximize opportunities for subsidized housing participants to build assets and financial capability.

Roundtable Participants

The roundtable brought together a diverse group of participants with experience in both subsidized housing and asset building. Among the participants with expertise in subsidized housing were:

- Lourdes Castro Ramirez, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Anice Schervish Chenault, FSS Program Manager/Jobs Plus Program Advisor, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Aaron Gornstein, President and CEO, Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH)
- Chris Norris, Executive Director, Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership
- Greg Russ, Executive Director, Cambridge Housing Authority
- Members of a Community of Practice of FSS practitioners established by Abt Associates to inform the identification of promising practices in FSS.

In addition to Sherry Riva, Executive Director of Compass Working Capital, and other members of the Compass staff, participants with expertise in asset building and financial capability included:

- Desmond Brown, Deputy Assistant Director, Office of Financial Empowerment, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
- Erin Currier, Director, Financial Security and Mobility, Pew Charitable Trusts
- Tom Shapiro, Director, Institute on Assets and Social Policy, Brandeis University

The roundtable also featured FSS program coordinators and managers from several housing authorities and Compass Working Capital; funders from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and the Kresge Foundation; advocates, analysts, and researchers from a range of policy and research organizations; and a participant in Compass Working Capital's FSS program. Anthony Barrows, Vice President, ideas42, gave an inspiring lunchtime presentation full of relevant lessons from behavioral science.

The engagement of individuals from a subsidized housing background with individuals from an asset building and financial capability background was an important goal of the roundtable. With more than five million low-income households participating in different forms of subsidized housing programs across the U.S., subsidized housing represents an important conduit for reaching low-income individuals who might benefit from asset building efforts. Since most subsidized housing practitioners lack expertise with asset building, there are natural partnerships to be formed between subsidized housing practitioners and asset building practitioners to expand opportunities for subsidized housing participants to build assets and financial capability.

The roundtable created an opportunity for individuals playing a wide range of different roles, including practitioners, researchers, advocates, policymakers, and funders, to engage in meaningful dialogue. Aligning silos and systems is challenging work and the coordinated action of people in many different roles will likely be required to make progress in integrating asset building into subsidized housing programs.

Why Focus on Asset Building?

Traditionally, government efforts to help low-income individuals and families have focused on ensuring they have adequate resources to meet their basic needs. Many programs emphasize income transfers – and the provision of in-kind supports like decent-quality housing or medical care – to help ensure that the incomes available to low-income families are sufficient to meet their monthly expenses. Other programs focus on helping people build skills so they may qualify for and obtain higher-paying jobs.

While programs to help people increase their incomes are undeniably important, research has underscored the importance of helping families build assets as well as increase their incomes.[1] Programs aimed at increasing incomes can help people maintain a basic standard of living, but efforts to facilitate and encourage the accumulation of assets and to build financial capability are often needed to help them "get ahead." Among other things, assets can help people pay for post-secondary education to qualify for higher-paying jobs, to purchase homes to stabilize their living situation and build equity, to start a small business, and to save for retirement. Assets can also provide protection from setbacks such as the loss of a job that might – without the availability of emergency savings – lead to eviction, foreclosure or even homelessness.

Asset building programs emphasize a range of activities to help people build wealth and financial capability, including financial coaching to help people pay down debt, improve their credit scores, access mainstream financial services, develop and adhere to budgets, and build savings. Some asset building programs provide financial incentives for people to save through such vehicles as child savings accounts and individual development accounts or facilitate the accumulation of assets in other ways, such as by building home equity through sustainable homeownership or by automatically enrolling workers in 401(k) programs.

As Tom Shapiro emphasized at the roundtable, there is a huge racial gap in the distribution of assets in the U.S. that serves to perpetuate inequality. Currently, the median white household has about $114,000 in financial assets while the median African American household has only about $7,000.[2] By helping to bridge the gap, asset building programs play an important role in increasing opportunity for everyone to move up the economic ladder and achieve their full economic potential.

Why Focus on Subsidized Housing?

Nationwide, more than 5.1 million households live in federally subsidized housing. More than two-thirds of these households have incomes at or below 30 percent of the area median income (roughly the poverty line on a national basis). While the financial lives of these households is not well-documented, evidence indicates that the vast majority of households living in subsidized housing have extremely low levels of assets and many face challenges related to credit, debt, and access to mainstream financial services. With low incomes, low levels of assets, and credit and debt challenges, many subsidized housing participants could benefit greatly from asset building services. Their participation in subsidized housing provides a potential vehicle for reaching these households as their addresses are known, they have regular contact with housing providers, and – in the case of households living in subsidized housing developments (though not for households with Housing Choice Vouchers which families use to find housing on the private market) – participants are grouped in centralized locations that facilitate the provision of services.

Another benefit of working with subsidized housing participants is that they have stable housing, which may allow them to focus on addressing other challenges in their lives, such as credit and debt challenges or barriers to increased earnings. Ironically, one of the core features of subsidized housing that contributes to its stability – a rent formula that ensures rents are affordable to households of all incomes – may also operate as a barrier to increased work. Households participating in the largest HUD rental assistance programs are generally required to pay about 30 percent of their income in rent. While this approach has the benefit of keeping housing costs affordable for low-income renters and rationing a scarce federal resource by providing larger subsidies to those that need them, it also means that a household's rent will generally increase if its earnings increase, which some participants experience as a barrier to increased earnings.[3] Financial coaching can help subsidized housing participants plan for higher rents when their earnings go up – and even the loss of assistance if their earnings render them ineligible for assistance.

At the roundtable, Jeffrey Lubell, Director of Housing and Community Initiatives at Abt Associates, identified three main opportunities for integrating asset building into subsidized housing:

- Strengthening and expanding participation in the FSS Program
- Incorporating asset building more holistically into the basic fabric of housing assistance
- Utilizing partnerships between subsidized housing providers and asset building organizations to expand asset building services for subsidized housing participants

Much of the conversation in the roundtable focused on the first two opportunities, which are discussed below. While less time was spent on the third idea during the roundtable, it represents very low-hanging fruit for collaboration between asset building organizations and subsidized housing providers. Among other asset building services that could be offered to subsidized housing residents through such partnerships are: earned income tax credit outreach and free preparation of tax returns, individual development accounts, financial education, and financial coaching. In his presentation, Desmond Brown of the CFPB noted that bundling financial capability services into workforce programs is more effective than doing either alone and that the CFPB would be working to test strategies for integrating financial education into workforce programs; lessons learned from these partnerships may well have application for integrating financial capability into subsidized housing. As he noted, CFPB's Your Money, Your

Goals curriculum provides a helpful roadmap for practitioners looking for ways to enhance the availability of asset building services for residents of subsidized housing and participants in other social programs.

Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program

Adopted by Congress as part of the National Affordable Housing Act of 1990 (also known as the Cranston-Gonzalez Act), FSS is arguably the largest asset building program in the U.S. targeted specifically on poor and near-poor households. Congressional Justifications for HUD's FY 2016 budget indicate that FSS currently serves about 72,000 households. Until 2015, FSS was only available to households participating in the Housing Choice Voucher program or living in public housing – two of the three largest HUD rental assistance programs. Recently, Congress expanded eligibility for FSS to households living in a privately owned development subsidized through the project-based Section 8 program – the third of HUD's major rental assistance programs.

Under FSS, participants who volunteer to join the program meet with a coach or case manager to develop a five-year "contract of participation" and an accompanying "individual training and services plan" identifying the participants' short- and long-term goals for making progress toward economic security and the services participants will receive (either directly or through referrals) to help them achieve these goals. Participants meet regularly with the coach or case manager, who helps them stay on track and access services they may need to overcome barriers to increasing earnings or achieving other goals. Some (but not all) FSS programs also provide participants with financial coaching or referral to financial coaching.

As with all participants in HUD rental assistance programs, the rents of FSS participants usually increase when their earnings increase. However, as an incentive for FSS participants to increase their earnings and achieve their goals, an amount generally equal to the increased rent that participants pay due to increased earnings goes into an escrow account to which participants have access if they succeed in achieving their goals. This escrow account also functions as a powerful vehicle for participants to build assets. FSS participants who become employed, become independent of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance for at least a year, and achieve the other goals set out in their contracts are eligible to graduate from FSS and receive the funds in their escrow accounts. FSS programs also have the option of allowing participants to access their funds on an interim basis during the course of their contract, if needed to help achieve their goals – for example, for car repair or to pay for an education or training course.

In his presentation, Jeffrey Lubell cited data from a national evaluation sponsored by HUD to illustrate the potential of FSS. This study tracked 170 families in the Housing Choice Voucher program who enrolled in FSS at 13 housing authorities over a four-year period. After four years, about one-quarter of the families had graduated, experiencing increases in earnings from $19,902 in 2006 to $33,390 in 2009 (all in 2009 dollars) and escrows averaging more than $5,000 per family. Another one-quarter were still in the program and experiencing sizable increases in both hourly wages and hours worked, with escrow balances averaging around $3,500. Of the remaining households, most were no longer in the FSS program, including many who gave up or lost their vouchers. About one-sixth were still in the FSS program but not making progress.[4]

As roundtable participants discussed, FSS provides an important platform for collaboration and partnership to expand asset building opportunities for subsidized housing residents. Given the asset building potential of the FSS escrow account, the ability to work with participants over the course of several years, and the fact that credit and debt issues directly impact the ability of FSS participants to deploy the assets they develop through the FSS escrow account, such collaboration is a natural fit. The following are some of the potential opportunities for collaboration involving FSS discussed at the roundtable:

- **Developing strong relationships between public housing authorities (PHAs) and asset building organizations that lead to frequent referrals of FSS participants to credit counseling and/or financial coaching.** Biljana Jesic, FSS Program Manager at Home Forward in Portland, OR (the city's PHA), stressed the importance of building strong relationships between FSS programs and other service providers, such as providers of financial coaching, to ensure that program participants who receive a referral have a strong likelihood of being served. Biljana noted that they have effectively promoted Individual Development Account to FSS participants through such partnerships.

- **Creating a public-private FSS model in which an asset building non-profit organization takes the lead in administering an FSS program in partnership with a public housing authority or other housing provider, such as an owner of a project-based Section 8 development.** The partnerships that Compass Working Capital has formed to operate FSS programs in partnership with the Lynn and Cambridge Housing Authorities, the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership (MBHP), The Caleb Group, and POAH illustrate the potential of this model. As Compass Working Capital's Sherry Riva described at the roundtable, these partnerships allow Compass Working Capital to do what it does best – provide financial coaching and asset building strategies – while leveraging the asset building potential inherent in the HUD-funded FSS escrow account.

- **Incorporating financial coaching into the basic coaching model for FSS clients in some other way, such as by training existing FSS staff to deliver financial coaching.** In this model, an asset building non-profit could serve as a mentor to the existing FSS staff and/or a back-up to provide support and address challenging issues that arise. Compass Working Capital plans to experiment with this model as it works to expand its support for FSS programs focused on helping participants build assets and financial capability.

Another type of partnership – between housing providers and local philanthropic organizations – may be useful for expanding the size of an existing FSS program – or starting a new FSS program. As noted previously, FSS currently serves about 72,000 households, but this is just a fraction of the number of households that are eligible for FSS and potentially able to take advantage of it. There are nearly two million households in one of HUD's three main rental assistance programs (Housing Choice Vouchers, public housing, and the project-based Section 8 program) that have a head of household who is neither elderly nor disabled.[5] All of these households – plus persons with disabilities and elderly individuals who wish to increase their earnings – are potential candidates for FSS. The authorizing legislation places no limit on the number of households who can participate in FSS so there is clearly significant room for the program to grow.[6] Many philanthropic organizations will regard the FSS escrow accounts that HUD funds for all FSS participants as significant leverage for their investments.

Partnerships and collaboration can also play an important role at the national level in raising the visibility of FSS and the value of partnerships between asset building organizations and housing providers around FSS, strengthening policies related to FSS, and conducting research to document outcomes and suggest ways to improve the program. As Kris Siglin, Vice President for Policy at the Housing Partnership Network, noted at the roundtable, partnerships played an important role in encouraging Congress to expand the FSS program to project-based Section 8 developments in 2015.

Incorporating Asset Building into the Core Fabric of Housing Assistance

Even as the participants in the roundtable identified ways to strengthen and grow the existing FSS program, they expressed considerable interest in new approaches that might integrate asset building more holistically into the fabric of housing assistance. As Cambridge Housing Authority Executive Director Greg Russ and Compass Working Capital Executive Director Sherry Riva described, a pilot program to do just this is starting up at the Cambridge Housing Authority (CHA). Under the three-year pilot program, a portion of the rent payments made by households in two public housing developments will automatically be deposited into a savings account on the households' behalf. The automatic savings consists of a small portion (1%) of the household's monthly rent payment plus half of the increased rent that households pay on account of any increase in earnings.[7] At one of the developments, the households will also be offered the opportunity to receive financial coaching from Compass Working Capital.

This pilot initiative – which CHA is able to offer because of the flexibility allowed under HUD's Moving to Work program[8] – will help Compass Working Capital and CHA better understand the extent to which the automatic savings accounts help to improve residents' outlook for the future and encourage increased earnings. By offering financial coaching in one site but not the other, the partners also hope to gain insight into the relative importance of financial coaching.

While the Cambridge pilot program has much in common with the FSS program offered by Compass Working Capital to Housing Choice Voucher holders in Cambridge, it differs in being offered automatically to all households, rather than solely to those who volunteer for the program. This shift from an opt-in model (FSS) to a model in which clients are automatically enrolled – with the option to opt-out of the program by ignoring any savings they accrue – builds on essential learning from behavioral economics about the importance of removing barriers to program participation and of shifting program defaults to reflect desired outcomes. These and other lessons of behavioral economics were emphasized by Anthony Barrows, Vice President of ideas42, at a lunchtime presentation at the roundtable.

Looking to the Future

The roundtable discussion confirmed the potential inherent in FSS and other approaches for expanding asset building opportunities for subsidized housing participants. A number of steps are needed to help realize this potential:

- **Identify and share promising practices across FSS programs.** There are hundreds of FSS programs around the country, but few mechanisms for effectively sharing lessons learned by one program with another. The use of a co-active coaching model[9] described by Biljana Jesic of Home Forward in Portland and the financial coaching model developed by Compass

Working Capital are two examples of innovative variations on the standard FSS case management approach that would be useful for more FSS practitioners to know about. While Compass Working Capital's approach includes a greater focus on building financial capability, both approaches place a strong emphasis on empowering clients to set their own goals, determine their own priorities, and utilize and build their own judgment to determine next steps.

As a first step in enhancing the sharing of these and other promising practices across FSS programs, HUD is currently gathering information on promising practices through a Community of Practice (CoP) of FSS coordinators and plans to share the results in the Fall of 2016. In addition to Home Forward and Compass Working Capital, the CoP includes coordinators of eight other FSS programs and two representatives of owners of project-based Section 8 developments that have started new FSS programs. Most of the CoP members were in attendance at the roundtable and debriefed the next day on the implications of the roundtable discussion for the FSS program.

- **Increase collaboration among subsidized housing providers, asset building organizations and funders.** The roundtable underscored the importance of developing robust partnerships between subsidized housing providers and asset building organizations as well as between these organizations and local funders to expand the availability of asset building services for subsidized housing participants. The public-private partnership model that Compass Working Capital has developed for its FSS programs – where Compass Working Capital is the primary interface with the client, delivering financial coaching to participants, with the housing authority or owner managing the escrow accounts and private philanthropy providing resources to expand the program – provides one illustration of how such partnerships can work. But other models are also likely to be valuable.

  Policy and philanthropic organizations can help increase the number of communities in which such collaboration is taking place by raising the visibility of FSS and the potential inherent in collaboration around FSS within both the asset building and subsidized housing communities. At both the local and national levels, funders can help convene stakeholders from the subsidized housing and asset building worlds to encourage partnerships, the sharing of best practices, and the development of supportive policies.

- **Expand participation in the FSS program to serve a much larger share of the eligible population.** As noted above, FSS currently serves only a small fraction of all households who are eligible for and could benefit from it. To reach more eligible households, efforts are needed to expand existing FSS programs and start new ones. In addition to continuing efforts to engage public housing agencies around expanding their FSS programs, outreach to owners of project-based Section 8 developments who are now eligible to participate in FSS will be very important. Many owners of project-based Section 8 developments are entrepreneurial non-profit organizations or for-profit companies that will readily understand the potential inherent in FSS to benefit their residents and enhance the quality of life in their developments. Because they will be starting from scratch in creating new FSS programs, owners of project-based Section 8 developments may be particularly amenable to partnerships with asset building organizations and others who are able to assume primary responsibility for administering the new FSS programs. Compass Working Capital has developed fruitful partnerships of this nature with two organizations that own project-based Section 8 developments – The Caleb Group and POAH – who are now partnering with

Compass Working Capital to offer FSS to their residents.

In the coming years, Compass Working Capital plans to experiment with different approaches to sharing the learning it has accumulated on how to work with subsidized housing providers to administer a public-private FSS program and to adapt the FSS model to more effectively promote asset building and financial capability objectives. The goal of these efforts will be to help other organizations start or expand FSS programs with a similar emphasis on asset building as well as to learn which approaches to the replication and adaptation of its model are most effective.

- **Develop and evaluate innovative approaches to integrating asset building into subsidized housing.** The Cambridge FSS pilot generated substantial interest at the roundtable because it has the potential for integrating asset building into the fabric of subsidized housing, reducing barriers to participation. Experimentation with additional efforts to achieve this goal would be valuable to determine the extent to which asset building could be expanded to a much larger share of residents in subsidized housing.

  One specific area of innovation discussed at the roundtable was the structure of the escrow account itself. Changes to the account structure could help to encourage more residents to participate, while also decreasing the burden of administrative and financial complexities for housing authorities inherent in the execution of their mission. The Cambridge pilot utilizes a variation on the standard FSS escrow account in which families receive half of the standard FSS escrow when increased earnings leads to increased rent. This approach to calculating escrow – which Compass Working Capital utilizes in the standard FSS program it administers for Housing Choice Voucher holders in Cambridge as well – funds administration of the accounts and also better positions the Housing Authority to expand the program to more residents.

  As Biljana Jesic described, Home Forward in Portland, OR, also utilizes a variation on the standard FSS escrow account, which it calls the strike point approach. Under this approach, clients only build escrow once their rent exceeds a strike point of $350 per month. As in Cambridge, this approach reduces the costs of the escrow account to the agency, allowing it to offer the program to more households.[10] Home Forward also believes the strike point approach is more equitable because it ensures a participant's escrow accumulation does not depend on his or her starting level of earnings. This enables FSS participants who start the program employed to earn as much escrow as those who start unemployed.

  The Tacoma, WA housing authority is experimenting with still another variation on the FSS escrow account. As Andrea Cobb, Manager, Tacoma Housing Authority Educator Project described, Tacoma awards escrow when clients achieve specific goals, such as completing a financial education course, getting a driver's license reinstated, paying off fines, or completing a degree.

  All of these innovations rely on the authority that Cambridge, Home Forward, and Tacoma have to vary from standard program rules under HUD's Moving to Work program. There are currently more than 30 other Moving to Work PHAs and there will soon be many more as Congress recently authorized the expansion of the program to another 100 PHAs. This expansion will be designed to facilitate the testing and evaluation of new ideas, providing a potential platform for studying ways to strengthen FSS and expand asset building opportunities for subsidized housing participants. Of particular interest will be approaches that use MTW's flexibility to build asset building opportunities into the fabric of subsidized housing so households do not need to "opt-in" to benefit.

There is certainly room for innovation in the FSS programs offered by subsidized housing providers that are not participating in Moving to Work as well. Whether an innovation is part of a Moving to Work program or not, it will be important to rigorously study it to determine what can be learned to inform future efforts and build knowledge about how to effectively integrate asset building into subsidized housing programs.

- **Develop new policies to encourage expansion of FSS and the integration of asset building into subsidized housing.** As Barbara Sard of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities noted, the inclusion within recent appropriations bills of a provision expanding FSS eligibility to residents of project-based Section 8 developments has brought FSS to the attention of members of Congress and their staff. This could be a window to adopt new policies that further support FSS, such as the adoption of legislation to make permanent the expansion of FSS to project-based Section 8,[11] the adoption of practices for FSS coordinator funding that could make the distribution of FSS coordinator funds more predictable while rewarding agencies that leverage local funding to grow their FSS programs, or the creation of new incentives to encourage PHAs to expand their FSS programs. Policy support for other efforts to integrate asset building into the fabric of subsidized housing could also be helpful by allowing for wider experimentation with new approaches as well as the adoption of promising approaches by a larger number of agencies.

Accomplishing these steps will require the collaboration and commitment of a broad network of stakeholders, many of whom participated in the roundtable. This is one of several causes for optimism that, in time, the potential inherent in FSS and other approaches for expanding asset building opportunities for subsidized housing participants can be realized.

Appendix: List of Roundtable Presenters and Participants

Presenters:

- Anthony Barrows, Vice President, ideas42
- Desmond Brown, Deputy Assistant Director, Office of Financial Empowerment, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau
- Lourdes Castro Ramirez, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Andrea Cobb, Manager, Tacoma Housing Authority Education Project
- Erin Currier, Director, Financial Security and Mobility, Pew Charitable Trusts
- Tanya Febrillet, Compass Working Capital FSS Program Graduate
- Aaron Gornstein, President and CEO, Preservation of Affordable Housing
- Biljana Jesic, Program Manager, Home Forward (Portland, OR)
- Ianna Kachoris, Program Officer, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
- Fred Karnas, Senior Fellow, The Kresge Foundation
- Jeffrey Lubell, Director of Housing and Community Initiatives, Abt Associates
- Chris Norris, Executive Director, Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership
- Sherry Riva, Founder and Executive Director, Compass Working Capital
- Greg Russ, Executive Director, Cambridge Housing Authority
- Barbara Sard, Vice President for Housing Policy, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
- Anice Schervish Chenault, FSS Program Manager/Jobs Plus Program Advisor, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Tom Shapiro, Director, Institute on Assets and Social Policy, Brandeis University
- Kris Siglin, Vice President, Policy, Housing Partnership Network
- Sandra Suarez, Operations Manager, Compass Working Capital
- Hilary Swab Gawrilow, Director of Federal Policy, CSH

Participants:

- Mona Al-Abadi, Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership
- Albert Barnor, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston
- Nicole Barrett, Council of Large Public Housing Authorities
- Maurice Barry, US Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Loren Bernardi, US Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Joni Boissonneault, Portland Housing Authority
- Judson Brown, Santa Ana Housing Authority
- Mary Cattanach, John D'Amelia and Associates
- Alexandra Curley, The American City Coalition
- Sheida Elmi, The Pew Charitable Trusts
- Kristen Fair, Housing Authority of the City of Tulsa
- Lindsay Finkenstaedt, POAH Communities
- Ronald Fisher, District of Columbia Housing Authority
- Lesley Freiman, Abt Associates
- Tom Fry, Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation

- Peter Gagliardi, HAPHousing
- Vanessa Galarza, Rhode Island Housing
- Lynsday Garval, Housing Partnership Network
- Theresa Gibbons, Heartland Alliance
- Laurie Glidden, MaineHousing
- Erin Graves, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston
- Marissa Guananja, W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- Alison Harte, CSH
- Michele Haupt, Sioux City Housing Authority
- Brandon Hoffman, Harvard Kennedy School
- Christine Keshura, US Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Ann Lentell, Compass Working Capital
- Melinda Marble, Pilot House Associates, LLC
- Doug Marthaler, Lincoln Housing Authority
- Meaghan McCarthy, MassHousing
- Marianne McDermott, The Caleb Group
- Joanne McKenna, MA Department of Housing and Community Development
- Joe McNealy, US Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Nichole Mikshenas, MassHousing
- Michelle Molina, John D'Amelia and Associates
- William Morales, US Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Debra Nutter, The Caleb Group
- Nancy Rivera, HAPHousing
- Luz Rivera, HAPHousing
- Daniel Rogers, US Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Trevor Samios, POAH
- Sarah Sattelmeyer, The Pew Charitable Trusts
- Sarah Savage, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston
- Nancy Scull, Montgomery County Housing Opportunities Commission
- Claribel Shavers, Rhode Island Housing
- Tiffany Smith, Howard County Housing
- Andrew Spofford, POAH
- Jon Springfield, POAH
- Julianna Stuart, Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future (SAHF)
- Jimmy Stuart, Compass Working Capital
- Rene Tarver, City of Oceanside
- Susan Tatum, Lincoln Housing Authority
- Brian Vallimont, Compass Working Capital
- Michelle Whetten, Springboard to Opportunities
- Teresa Wolf, Housing Authority of the City of Tulsa
- Richard Daughtery, US Department of Housing and Urban Development

References

[1] See Shapiro, Thomas M. and Edward N. Wolff, Eds. 2015. *Assets for the Poor: The Benefits of Spreading Asset Ownership.* New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

[2] See Shapiro, Thomas M., Laura Sullivan, et. al., March 2015. *The Racial Wealth Gap: Why Policy Matters.* Demos and the Institute on Assets and Social Policy.

[3] In an evaluation of the Jobs Plus demonstration, public housing residents identified having to pay more rent as the chief obstacle to increased work effort. Bloom, Howard, S. James A. Riccio, and Nandita Verma with Johanna Walter. 2005. *Promoting Work in Public Housing: the Effectiveness of Jobs-Plus.* Washington, D.C.: MDRC.

[4] De Silva, Lalith, Imesh Wijewardena, Michelle Wood, and Bulbul Kaul. 2011. *Evaluation of the Family Self-Sufficiency Program: Prospective Study.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. This evaluation did not include a control group. MDRC is currently conducting a random assignment evaluation of FSS on behalf of HUD that does include a control group, but results are not expected for several years.$10,000 (accounts will be capped at this amount).

[5] Analysis of HUD data by Center on Budget and Policy Priorities staff and shared by email dated 11/11/2015.

[6] The financial challenge to growth is related instead to the cost of administering an effective program. There are several strategies that have been suggested, and some are being tested, to lower the costs of administering the program or distribute existing funding more effectively. This is an

[7] Through its authority under the Moving to Work program, the Cambridge Housing Authority has established “rent bands” in public housing to replace the standard 30 percent of income rent policy. Under this policy, residents’ rent increase only when their incomes rise to a level sufficient to shift them from one band to the next. The bands are designed to increase the stability of rent calculations by eliminating the need to modify rent when income goes up or down only modestly, such that it stays within the income range of the band, while ensuring that rents are adjusted for residents whose income increases or decreases by a large amount and moves to another band.

[8] As described by HUD, “Moving to Work (MTW) is a demonstration program for public housing authorities (PHAs) that provides them the opportunity to design and test innovative, locally-designed strategies that use Federal dollars more efficiently, help residents find employment and become self-sufficient, and increase housing choices for low-income families. MTW gives PHAs exemptions from many existing public housing and voucher rules and more flexibility with how they use their Federal funds. MTW PHAs are expected to use the opportunities presented by MTW to inform HUD about ways to better address local community needs.” For more, see http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/mtw

[9] A coaching model centered on the belief that the client is creative, resourceful, and whole, and the coach is there to help the client tap into their own resources to resolve issues they face.

[10] For more information on these alternative approaches to setting escrow see Cramer, Reid and Jeffrey Lubell. 2009. “Rental Assistance Asset Accounts: An Opportunity to Support Work and Savings Among Recipients of Federal Housing Assistance.” Washington, DC: New America Foundation and Brennan, Maya and Jeffrey Lubell. 2012. “More Than a Roof: Case Studies of Public Housing Agency Initiatives to Increase Residents’ Economic Security.” Washington, DC: Center for Housing Policy.

[11] Since the expansion is currently included only in recent appropriations bills, and not in authorizing legislation, it needs to be re-adopted each year. Congress could eliminate the need for such annual re-adoption by making the extension permanent in authorizing legislation.