



"Tools for Success" webinars for Assets for Independence grantees:

Finding "Ready" Savers: Innovative Recruitment Strategies to Increase Program Completion

Friday, January 25, 2013
12:30 – 1:30 p.m. PST / 3:30 – 4:30 p.m. EST

Jimmy Crowell: Hi everyone, and welcome to our webinar on Finding Ready Savers: Innovative Recruitment Strategies to Increase Program Completion. This webinar is the next in our series of "Tools for Success" webinars designed for Assets for Independence grantees and sub-grantees. My name is Jimmy Crowell, and I'd like to welcome you to our conversation today.

Before we start today's presentation, I'd like to begin with a few housekeeping items. If you're having trouble dialing in, you can listen through your computer using speakers or connecting a headset to your computer.

If you're having technical difficulties such as trouble connecting to the visual portion of the webinar, send us an e-mail and we'll send you the Power Point file as an attachment so that you can follow along. The e-mail address is tmurphy@cfed.org.

Today's webinar is being recorded, so you will be able to review it on demand. You will receive a follow up email in a week or two with details on how to access the recording. We will also send a copy of the PowerPoint presentation that is being used today.

We have a number of participants registered today, so your phone lines have been muted to ensure sound quality.

We encourage you to send questions at any time during this presentation by using the Questions box in your GoToWebinar Control Panel as you see on your screen. We will try to answer as many of your questions as we can after the presentation.

We realize that some of you on this call may not yet be AFI grantees, so we want to provide you with information about the program. The Assets for Independence Program, or AFI for short, is the largest source of funding for IDA programs nationally.

To learn more about AFI, including how to apply, visit www.idaresources.org

We also encourage you to attend an upcoming orientation webinar focused on Planning an AFI Project which will take place on Tuesday, January 29th from 2 to 2:45 PM EST. You can register for the webinar at www.idaresources.org.

Now that we've gotten those housekeeping items out of the way, I'd like to introduce our three guest speakers for today's webinar. Our first guest speaker is Mary McIlvaine. Mary is the IDA coordinator at Racine Neighborhood Watch in Wisconsin. Racine Neighborhood Watch is a nonprofit working with City of Racine residents to achieve safe neighborhoods by focusing on crime prevention and quality of life concerns. RNW is the subgrantee of the City of Racine IDA for first-time homebuyers.

Next we have Kimberly Roy, a program manager with Mile High United Way in Denver Colorado. Mile High United Way (MHUW) coordinates the metro Denver's Adult IDA program and since 1999 has leveraged partnerships with local government, non-profit and corporate organizations to provide asset counseling, financial education, and matching dollars for nearly sixteen hundred account holders.

And, last but not least, we have Tatiana Siegenthaler, the financial services manager at EARN in San Francisco. EARN breaks the cycle of poverty and creates new cycles of prosperity by helping low-wage families save and invest in assets that will secure their futures and the futures of their children. And this is me. I'm Jimmy Crowell, I work for the AFI Resource Center. The AFI Resource Center provides training and technical assistance to AFI grantees, their project partners, and other organizations that are providing asset building services across the nation.

The objectives of today's webinar are to explore effective recruitment strategies to improve program outcomes and program completion rates, to learn from three AFI grantees on their experiences identifying "asset-ready" savers and to review the new AFI Tool for Success, "Tips for Recruiting AFI IDA Participants Who Are Ready to Save."

Here is a screenshot of the new AFI Tool for Success. During this webinar, we will go through each of the 5 recruitment tips that can be found on this resource. The resource can be found on the AFI Resource Center at www.idaresources.org under the "managing your grant" section under the "Tools for Success Guides" tab. A link to this guide will also be sent to you in a follow up email in about a week or two.

Before I hand it over to our first guest speaker, we would like to get a better sense of where everyone on the call is in terms of their current recruitment strategies. Again, not all of you on the call may be running an IDA program now, but, if you'd like, you can answer today's polls based on how you would run your IDA program. So, if you could all take a minute to answer the following poll on your screen, it will help us better assess your needs and will better inform our comments today.

The question is; which recruitment strategy has been most effective for you in enrolling successful savers?

- Recruiting clients or staff within your own organization
- Partner organization referrals
- Word of mouth referrals
- Promotional materials such as brochures or fliers
- Pre-screening tools

I'll give you guys just a minute to answer that question. Ok we are going to close the poll and share the answers. It looks like we are heavily relying on referrals, both from partners and word of mouth. Hopefully, this webinar will give you some more recruitment strategies for you to use.

Now, I would like to hand over the mic to Tatiana from EARN who will be covering our first tip; recruiting clients from within your own organization. Tatiana?

Tatiana Siegenthaler: Thanks Jimmy. First of all, as you mentioned, we are here in San Francisco and it is lunch time and EARN is by a very busy street so you might hear some horns in the background. So apologies for that. I am going to get started. I am very excited to be part of this presentation and I am going to share with you some tips to recruit from within your organization. First of all, and this is for the new IDA grantees so people who are thinking about having their own IDA program; recruiting from within your organization is the easiest way to get ready savers to your IDA programs. A lot of the long time IDA providers are nodding their heads now. If your organization offers different services like tax preparation, credit repair, small business or homeownership counseling, take this opportunity to promote your IDA program. Have flyers at hand, educate and train staff members in your organization to provide information about the IDA program in a very engaging manner. So for instance, here at EARN, we have two main programs or offerings. One is the IDA program, which is funded by AFI, and we also have a Triple Boost Account and this is privately funded. This is a matched savings account for parents interested in saving for their child's education. For instance, when someone joins the IDA program, we will make sure to invite them to join the Triple Boost Account, if they meet all the eligibility requirements and vice versa.

I have a question and it is not a poll, you don't need to vote or do anything at your computer, it is just to reflect. For the people attending this webinar who work for an organization that offers a different array of services, this is the question; how many of you have clients who have been benefitted by your services for a long time and then they tell you "hey I didn't know you have an IDA program, is this new?" This actually has happened at EARN. People who were in the IDA program didn't know we had a child savings account too. The lesson here is, don't assume your clients know all about the services you offer. Make sure to use communication channels to remind people about your IDA program. We have learned that people need to see or hear things at least three times before they decide to take action. At EARN, we use our saver newsletter that you can see on the left side of the slide and that's how we keep spreading the word about the services we offer. Another thing that I would recommend you, to recruit people from within your organization, is just to take time when they complete the program or if they benefitted from your services, tell them to sign

up for an IDA account. You can mail them a follow up poster; we have learned that posters are the easiest way to communicate with savers, more than letters. Here in this slide you can see a poster that we sent to people in Marin County in Los Angeles. So we have had the IDA program in Marin for several years and we were launching the Triple Boost Account there and the way we did it we just mailed a post card. Basically that's what we did and these are some of the strategies EARN has used to recruit from within the organizations. I am ready to move onto the next topic.

Jimmy: Before we move on to the next recruitment tip, I'd like to administer another poll. Please take a minute to answer the following question.

Do you tailor your outreach materials to specific groups of people, or do you broadly advertise to anyone who may be interested in participating?

- I tailor my outreach materials
- I try to reach a broad audience.

I'll give everyone a minute to answer that. Ok, we are going to close the poll and share the results. It looks like quite an even mix. The next recruitment tip will give you a lot of great ideas on how to think from the perspective of your target population when designing outreach materials and strategies. Tatiana, can you tell us about EARN's experience with this?

Tatiana: Definitely. For EARN, before designing our marketing and promotional materials, we identify our target market and the regional area where we are going to go to. I recommend to IDA providers that you must narrow your outreach regional efforts to make sure you're learning from the population you need to serve. You can use online resources that can help identify the demographic and income of the town you want to target. Make sure you go to a granular level, a very detailed level, to identify where most of the population lives so you count people working in those specific areas. For instance, when EARN launched the Triple Boost Account in the East Bay, the East Bay has hundreds of thousands of people. This is a very vast region but we did our homework and we identified two zip codes where most of the people that we target were concentrated and then we identified organization like churches, community organizations, libraries, places where we could distribute our outreach materials. Once you have narrowed your outreach regional efforts, from what we have learned, when creating materials it is important to engage your savers and community members to get their input. I know that that might sound like it is a lot of work and it might be expensive, but from our experience, it is not expensive. On the contrary, it is very cost effective. They know this community member and these people, they know what they want to see. So I am going to give you an instance, here at EARN we developed three basic versions of our outreach fliers, nothing stylish or complicated and we asked our savers and people who came by our office to give us feedback and this is what we learned; people will only read at most two paragraphs so make sure you explain your program in a short concise manner. When people approached the program for the first time, they want to know who else in their community is participating. It is important to portray savers that are well known in their community. This will help build trust in your program

because it is endorsed by a community leader and will motivate more people to sign up. Again, keep it short and simple, don't go over one page and make sure that you also provide contact information so people in the community can contact you as soon as they can when they are excited. So the flyer that we have here on the right hand side, this flyer was developed specifically for Marin County and we basically created three mock-ups and we asked people what they thought and we got their feedback and we developed this flyer. We portrayed the savers who are very well known in their community and we portrayed them in a manner that suggests what our program does. The outcome of this exercise is that people in Marin County were actually grabbing these flyers out of curiosity. If you see one of your friends or neighbors in a flyer, you would grab it out of curiosity. So this has been a very successful tool to raise awareness about our program, specifically the Triple Boost Account.

Another thing that we have learned here at EARN is that when you're promoting your program, you need to make sure that the name that you're using is something nice and familiar to people and it gives them a general idea of what the program does or offers. Here on the left hand side of the slide, you can see in the past the Triple Boost Account was called SAFE and that's an acronym for savings accounts for education. So, when people called to ask about this program, about SAFE, they didn't remember the name, they couldn't explain what they were asking for. They were confused with the ideas so what we did is we had focus groups and surveys and we came up with the Triple Boost Account name and tagline and currently when we get phone calls with questions, people remember the name and they also have a general idea of what the account is for. They also understand that the triple has to do with something about tripling their savings. I will invite and even challenge people who are attending this webinar to come up with new names for your IDA program. Think out of the box. Then once you have a name that is familiar to them, you might get more people coming to your doors.

Finally, make sure to leverage technology to enroll new participants. At EAREN, we use our website, you can see it on the right hand side of the slide, as a recruitment tool. I bet that a lot of you, especially for people who are directly recruiting savers, feel frustrated often times because you are playing phone tag with a potential saver because they don't return your phone call or sometimes they leave a message but not their phone number. In the past, I felt frustrated, I was the one who was answering those phone calls. And as a result of playing phone tag, we lost a lot of people that never returned calls or never left messages or, because of our office hours, were never able to sign up for our program so we decided to develop an eligibility quiz for our website and you can see it there on the bottom. This allows people to find out right away if they might or might not qualify for our accounts. They can register anytime, day or night, and an example of this successful tool is that over the holiday break, the office was closed but we had over 30 people taking the eligibility quiz and registering for the Triple Boost Account. I would recommend, since for some people it is the first time they are looking at your organization, to put an endorsement of a well-known organization or media outlet that people trust. I know here that below the \$2,000 dollars you can see the Univision logo, we did that as a strategy to build trust among the Latino community and we link to an interview to one of their most popular shows where we are invited to talk about

what we do. This is basically what we have done when we are thinking about from the perspective of our target population.

Jimmy: Thank you, Tatiana. Before we move on to the next recruitment tip, I'm going to try and keep this interactive and keep collecting information. I would like the audience to answer another poll. You should see it on your screen now. The question is;

Which type of organization have you found to be the best partner for referring their clients to your AFI IDA program?

Responses:

- Staff at higher education institutions or high schools
- Homebuyer clubs and classes
- Faith-based organizations
- Credit-counseling services
- Microenterprise organizations

Please take a moment to answer that. Ok, we are going to close the poll and share the results. Great, it looks like the majority of you are using homebuyer clubs or classes which probably means there are a lot of folks on the call that offer homeownership IDAs. Depending on which type of asset your IDA program focuses on, targeting specific types of organizations for referrals is definitely something to think about. Mary, from Racine Neighborhood Watch is going to talk about the referral network her organization has built to find savers for their first time homebuyer program. Mary?

Mary McIlvaine: Hi, thank you. I am excited to be here also. In 2006, the City of Racine applied for and received its first homebuyer IDA grant and as you all know, in order to get the AFI dollars, you need to have a local match. We began with a good local match from the city and then along the way we began building a network and now with our second IDA, we have five community lending partners. I should tell you we have a very small IDA compared to the size of some that I've heard about but I think these principles would apply to any size IDA and although our IDA is only for first time homebuyers I think similarly you can take these ideas and tailor it to whether you're doing educational or entrepreneurial or other types of IDAs. The obvious thing for us was to try to make the most of building partnerships with people that were going to provide match dollars or in-kind services. So we did do that and we started out with what we call an IDA partner board and that is a group that meets every month and it includes people from the grantee, which would be the city, the subgrantee which is the office I work out of, and I do most of the face to face interaction with our savers, and then we have financial institution partners and the people that provide the training, the in-kind services and then also organizations that don't provide in-kind services but work with populations that might be inclined to participate in an IDA and in our case that would be our local county housing authority and community action agency and our local Habitat for Humanity office. What we try to do at these monthly meetings is network and share information whether it's about people in the program that some of us may be in contact with or people interested in the program that might have questions about how to get in. I have to tell you that as we launched our first IDA, it was right before the

housing market kind of fell apart so these partner board meetings every month throughout that difficult period were immensely helpful. We would hear each month from the bankers that would come with what the latest information was on their end and we could tell them that people in our program, they were, maybe they had saved their money and they were ready to buy but they were uncertain because of the general market conditions. But just being able to meet together and share information on a monthly basis has been really useful to us. The attendance at these meetings, although not each organization is represented every month, we try to make it easy and let people call in and over a year's period, usually people are able to come to a few meetings and that is a really good way to network. In the course of doing that on the partner board, that helps us build relationships with individuals at these organizations and they become more familiar with the IDA program and are better able to explain it to other people. Mostly we have not done a lot of formal advertising.

We have a pretty basic brochure and checklist that we send out and we share it with people far and wide. We make it easy to e-mail and encourage people to spread it around and distribute it to anyone they think is interested and then we also mirror the survey results that you showed so most often people are referred to us from the first time homebuyer class and I can pretty much count on the day after the class being held, getting some phone calls from people who heard about the IDA and want to learn more about it. That is pretty much a standard occurrence now and it has worked very well for us. People in that category are already, pre motivated to be interested in an IDA. They've already gone through the steps for preparing themselves for it and because we are a small program, we haven't run out of those kinds of candidates yet. I think that will work for us for some time to come. But starting with the obvious makes sense, I think that people who are working with educational or small business IDAs can do similar things and find the outlets or the people working with those individuals that would be interested in knowing about the IDA. The other thing that we've come to know is that you almost can't explain it too much and the way that has proven to work best is if you can just have a conversation with anyone with a question whether that's a banker that wants to help someone with a mortgage, or an interested participant or someone in the middle like someone from a title company that's not clear on something. We always try to make it as easy as possible to get answers as quickly as possible and really stay on top of communications. That helps a lot and it makes it work a lot better. Even in spite of that, when you feel like you're talking about and promoting your program all the time you have to realize there is still an ocean of people that don't know what it is. You can't talk about it too much. I think the report between the people on the partner board ripples out into the community within the groups of people they in turn interact with and that has helped us spread the word about our program.

As I was saying, you may not directly think that somebody on the left side communicates with people who come into contact with your program, maybe it's not even someone that interacts directly with you but, in the course of your work, if you find out that they have contacts with a lot of people that might want to apply, those are great contacts to make. Things change, for instance, income limits might change or other types of match programs that you can use with your program might change so for that reason, we try to not give too much detail on our basic information. Like Tatiana was saying, keep it basic and simple and

brief. Then where I'm willing to go into a great amount of detail is when I have a one on one conversation with somebody for their particular questions and you won't always get that from the same people they may have different questions. It will save you a lot of time if you keep it general. Help out however you can when it gets specific. We try to be represented at community events even if we can't be there. Occasionally, we will send out a media release which drums up some interest for us and it doesn't have to be really complicated, it does have to be repeated a lot and the communication is really the key or at least it has been for our program in terms of helping people access it. If there is anyone that leaves a voicemail or an e-mail I try to turn it around as quickly as possible so that they know that someone is paying attention.

Jimmy: Before we move onto Kimberly's presentation, we want to get a sense of the intake tools that some of you listening to the call may be using. Please take a minute to answer the following poll:

The question is do you use a screening tool before you enroll participants in your IDA program?

- No, I only use eligibility criteria
- Yes, to measure willingness to complete program requirements
- Yes, to assess if they will be able to save monthly
- Yes, to determine if they are ready to purchase an asset

Ok we are going to close the poll and share the results. It looks like a lot of you aren't using a screening tool; you're just using eligibility criteria. I just want to remind people that trying to determine willingness, ability to save and asset-readiness can help you find savers who are more likely to complete the program. Now, I am going to hand the mic over to Kimberly from Mile High United Way who is going to feature her organization's revamped intake process and how that has improved their program completion rates.

Kimberly Roy: Thank you, Jimmy. This is Kimberly Roy from United Way and I want to jump to just a little snippet from our last slide just to get your attention. We made a change to our program in 2009 that resulted in a 22% increase in the number of clients who closed their account with purchase versus what it was before the change. I am excited to share that with you and just wanted to let you know the results we had with it. Denver has a metro Denver IDA collaboration. Mile High United Way is the AFI grantee for that collaboration. We've been running that program since 1999 and we are currently administering our fifth and sixth AFI project. We've served nearly 1,600 account holders through 13 years and we've had a bunch of different variations for our collaboration. In our current structure, Mile High United Way is the lead partner and we do all the federal and local fundraising. We are the ones ensuring grant compliance and reporting. We manage the database, review all applications and pay all third party vendors for purchases but the most important role we play is we develop community partnerships and we collaborate with community partners in order to provide an effective and efficient program for IDA participants. Right now we have about 24 community organizations that partner with us on the IDA program. They each have different roles that they play, from financial educators, we have facilitators, we have partners that just refer clients in but the one that really pertains to what we're going to talk

about today is the asset counselors. We have 12 partners that serve as asset counselors. Over the years working with our community partners, we've talked with them about how best to screen clients to find if they're appropriate for the IDA. Through trial and error, we found many different layers that they need to screen through in order to find ready savers. We want to note first, is the client eligible? And I really like the online tool that EARN has, right now we are doing that with word of mouth with our partners. Only a full application determines eligibility but referral partners can screen out clients that are obviously not eligible. The next thing we want to look at is; does the client have sufficient earned income to save the minimum amount of funds necessary in order to reach their savings goal by the end of their savings period. In our program, they need to save one thousand dollars within a 2 year period and that comes to \$42 dollars a month, so make sure they can reasonably save that. The third thing we screen is if the client is really interested in one of the three savings goals. We found that having determination or passion for either education, homeownership or business is one of the best predictors of success. Part of this screening is also looking at whether or not a client is willing to complete the program requirements. For example, with financial education we used to not require any financial education until the client was about to make a purchase. We found that when we did that many clients forgot about the requirement until all of a sudden the home was about to be closed or until their business desperately needed a purchase or until they were starting school and needed the money right now and then they were trying to rush through the financial education as fast as possible just to access the match. The result of that was they weren't really getting much out of the financial education as they could have gotten out of it so what we did is we changed it and we said "ok now you have to do all your financial education before you open the account" but then clients were rushing through the financial education again this time because they wanted to get the account open as soon as possible. So we came to a middle ground and said "ok you can take one class before you open and then the rest of the classes before its time to purchase" and that's worked really well. We've been able to screen the client's willingness to take the classes and participate in the program for both asset counseling and financial education. The clients have time and can take the time to complete their requirement before the six months.

For a long time we were only screening the first three questions and we had a large number of savers who successfully opened their accounts, saved the full one thousand and completed the asset training and financial education but when it came down to it they were not able to make a purchase. They would apply for a mortgage, find out they didn't qualify or they would all of a sudden realize their two years are up and they would rush to throw together a business plan. For school, they hadn't even applied and now they are rushing to find a school quickly so they can spend their money. We also had a large number of clients that, because of this, at the end of two years, were coming to us asking for extension after extension and all of a sudden our 2 year program started to turn into a 3 or 4 year program for clients. And even at the end of 4 years some of our clients closed without making a purchase so it wasn't really effective. In 2009 we sat down with our asset counseling partners and we started to look at the problem. We were making sure that our clients were saver ready but we weren't screening to make sure that they were purchase ready. We were screening for whether or not they were interested in one of the three savings tools but we did

screen whether or not the asset goal was an appropriate goal for that clients. So in 2009 we came together to come up with some initial asset counseling requirements. The change now requires that all applicants meet with an asset counselor and have the asset counselor approve the applicant for their savings goal prior to opening the IDA. For each savings goal, the asset counselors are asked to look at different potential barriers.

First looking at education savers, we use the tool online called Paying for College; it is a free website that anybody can use. It has general financial education on there but it's geared specifically towards current or post-secondary students. Online they have a model there called Paying for College and this teaches students about student loans and grants and scholarships and helps them get ready to meet with the asset counselor. Once they've completed that they sit down with an educational advisor who works out of the local educational opportunity center. Educational centers are funded through the TRIO programs. It's a nationally funded program so there probably is one of these programs nearby your IDA program. The education advisor works with our student to complete an education plan that explores potential careers that the client hopes to have after school and what education would be required to obtain that career and also looks at the full cost of completing school. If the client is unsure of where they want to go to school or what they want to study, education advisors can help them explore their options. Then we have for the education advisor an education plan, a list of things the education advisor is screening for, potential pitfalls that may stop the client from being able to purchase on time. First they're looking at if the applicant already attends school, or is planning to go to school within the next 6 months to 1 year. We want to make sure the client is going to school early enough into the IDA program so they can spend all the funds before the end of the 2 year period. A lot of our clients go to community colleges and it takes several semesters before they spend the full 5,000 dollars. The next thing they're looking at is they want to ask whether or not the student has applied or looked into applying. This gives some insight into whether or not they will be able to purchase. We have had students who opened their IDA and it wasn't until they gave us the tuition bill when we found out it wasn't an approved vocational institution under AFIs requirements. So our education advisors now screen for that so we know that upfront. The other thing they're looking at is the financial plan for the student. Not only to ensure that clients can pay for school and living expenses while attending school but they can also talk to them about the student loans they anticipate taking out to complete their education. Our education advisors compare the estimated monthly payments they'll be making on the student loans compared to the average monthly salary of the job they're hoping to attain. This helps clients plan reasonably for their financial status after school and look at if this is a reasonable expense that will make things better. The other thing they're looking at is the student debt which has been an issue. We have some students who have outstanding tuition that they have not paid and they cannot enroll in new classes until that outstanding debt has been paid and so we want to work with them to pay down the debt before they even open their IDA to make sure it's not a barrier.

Next we looked at our homeownership savers. Our network includes five different homeownership counseling organizations. These counselors meet with our IDA applicants to review their person financial situation and determine whether or not homeownership is a

reasonable goal at this time. If the client is determined not eligible at this time, the advisor gives them steps to improve their situation and they're invited to apply again when their financial situation improves. What the homeownership counselor is screening for is whether or not the client can truly purchase a home within the next six months to two years. It's impossible to know for sure but they can get a pretty good idea of where the client is now. They are looking to make sure the client has sufficient income to purchase a suitable home or, if they don't now have sufficient income, if they can reasonably improve their income in the next 2 years. We ask this because we have families who qualify for a mortgage but only say 50,000 dollars which in Denver is going to buy you a studio condo and we have a family of six that only qualified for that 50,000 dollars so that was not appropriate. Or, in those cases, we can refer them to Habitat for Humanity but it's good to know up front what we're dealing with. They also screen for whether or not the applicant has any serious credit barriers in order to qualify for the mortgage, and if they do, whether or not the client can clear up those challenges in the next two years. Before we required this initial homeownership counsel we would have clients who were ready to purchase but had blemishes on their credit report that could have been cleared up had those problems been addressed earlier. The initial homeownership assessment gives our clients and homeownership counselors time to discover credit challenges and address them before the client applies for a mortgage.

Finally, business savers are required to take an initial exploring business class and once they complete that they complete an initial business proposal. We have five different business partners who will review the initial business proposal and what they are screening it for is they want to know, does this applicant already have a business up and running or do they have a solid business idea for a business they can start within the next 6 month or one year? Especially because of the bad economy and people losing their jobs, we had a lot of applicants come to us who wanted to start their own business and not work for someone else. When you start asking them about the business they will start and their target market, they had none of that down. They had 10 different ideas to start but no solid idea. So the initial business proposal that they have to complete requires them to narrow down their ideas and come up with a solid business idea. If the business counselor doesn't think the idea is sufficient right now, they'll work with them or have them take additional classes but they won't let them open the IDA until their business idea is focused. The other thing we're looking for is the business idea for the IDA program, and we follow the SBA requirements that we will not fund firearms, tobacco, pornography, pharmaceutical companies, things of that nature and then also does the participant have sufficient initial funds to start the business? We had business requests where the business would be very expensive to open but only had \$5,000 from the IDA. That's not a good match so the counselors worked with them to get to a viable idea for them and then they were able to start the business. The other thing we are looking for is if this is a business the person can make money from. We want to make sure we are making things better, not harder.

After we put these three tools in place in September 2009, we saw a big increase in accounts, not only accounts that opened but those accounts that made a purchase. Just for our homeownership IDAs, prior to 2009 only 34% made a purchase, after the initial

homeownership assessment was required, 66% of our clients since 2009 have made a purchase when they closed their account. That's a 32% increase. That is a pretty dramatic jump. For business IDAs, we had a small percentage of an increase but what we've also found is that the businesses coming through are much stronger, we are able to send them to business fairs. They are much more viable business ideas that are coming through that I think will be businesses that are longer term and help the family. Education IDAs surprised me how much this one jumped. It went up 12% and overall we had a 22% increase in clients who closed their accounts with purchase.

Jimmy: Thanks Kimberly. This is a great example of how a thorough screening process can improve program outcomes. I will be sure to include Kimberly's intake forms to the follow up email I will send in a week or two so you can review the work they've done.

Before we move into the last tip I would like to poll the audience on their habits for evaluating their outreach strategy. For time purposes, we are going to skip this poll but Mary is going to address the importance of evaluating your outreach strategies.

Mary: We are still relatively new but we began and we cast a wide net and I think Kimberly touched on a lot of things that were similar to what we experienced. So what we began doing for our homebuyer IDA is requiring that when people come to apply they bring their credit report as well as a free financial action plan from one of two credit counseling agencies which provide this in-kind service to us. Having them do that as soon as they step in the door has really narrowed it down to the most serious of applicants. We don't have enough of a run yet to know how that has changed our completion rate because we are still relatively new in the second IDA but I am thinking it will improve it substantially. This has also helped us guide people better once they do apply. There have been a lot of roadblocks for some of our people and as much as possible you work with them to let them step aside for a while until something is taken care of like a broken arm or what have you. We are also compelled to work only with those who are going to be able to complete by the time the grant is done. We do look very hard at that now and that has helped us make sure that we have the more seriously engaged people enroll in the IDA. We also don't let them immediately start saving. We found that also helps in our program to have people clear up past due bills for instance. We do not allow anyone to purchase their home without having completed all the educational components so they all have to finish that or we will not allow the IDA money to go toward that asset purchase. That also means that they will, once they do complete the education, get the IDA match they can leverage it along with other matches. The program becomes very attractive to them and motivates them to finish it.

Right from the get go somehow we knew to ask, how did you hear about us? We have been tracking that for a while and it follows along with what you saw in the previous poll, it is mostly homebuyer training referrals and mostly partners' referrals. The other thing that I am happy to tell you is that it is also word of mouth from our savers. They get excited about it and tell their friends who are similarly motivated and those friends call us up and ask about it. In a nutshell, it's not too hard to ask that when you have the person come and apply. It is interesting to learn how the word gets out in the community. I just have a place where I

enter into a spreadsheet I use to track things and it has worked well. It has meant that we haven't felt like we've had to delve into a lot of expense to promote it because the word of mouth is strong and referrals. My message to everyone here is that partnerships are the foundation for our program and connecting with people and working those partnerships will help. If you can step back and look at how they're working, certainly if there were more hours in the day we could do more outreach and make more connections. We have to utilize the ones that will be most productive for us. I encourage you to check those out. I have gotten ideas from this webinar to take back. I really appreciate the exchange of information here.

Jimmy: Thanks Mary. So now it is time to address some of the questions that have been filtering in from the audience. Again, if you have a question for any of our speakers, please type them into the questions box of your GoToWebinar control panel. Alright, so the first question we have is for Kim. Kim, what advice do you have on diplomatically breaking the news to an applicant that they haven't met the screening criteria?

Kim: It depends on the screening criteria. For the asset screening criteria, the most important thing we tell the clients is that we're not saying "no you can ever have an IDA." We're just saying that right now is not the right timing to open the account. So for example, with homeownership, when they aren't approved by the homeownership counselor, they are given a list of steps to work from and asked to come back in say six months and review where they are and if they're getting closer. For business clients, they may tell them, your business plan isn't solid enough right now, let's work together, let's get it there and if the client is driven they'll keep working. If they're just not eligible based off of AFI income or their assets are too high, then that's something we just have to tell them.

Mary: I can jump in. I have told numerous people sure you can open an IDA right away but it is not going to do a whole lot of good if you save your money and go to a lender who can't give you a mortgage because of credit issues so that helps them understand and I tell them, it's a process. You're not at the right point in the process but we'll help you get there if you're motivated to do that. I think that's helped us a lot.

Jimmy: The next question is for Tatiana. How do you train the staff at EARN to refer clients to the IDA program or the Triple Boost program?

Tatiana: I think that this is something that is in their radar for everyone here at EARN. Our CEO has always been talking about the importance of thinking about the team who offers the IDA program. The IDA program is the one that has to do the outreach work. So this comes from the top. One of the things that we do is make sure that at staff meetings, we keep our staff informed on how we are doing with the accounts, our account goals and making sure that they know any change that has happened. I think it is an ongoing process and I think that it's about making sure that your leader in your organization tells other staff members that outreach is a goal for everyone regardless of the department. Of course, when people have questions I will train them one-on-one about how the program works or any questions they may have.

Jimmy: Thanks Tatiana. So we've been getting a lot of questions about what to do with a prospective saver who isn't ready for the program. Any of you can jump in to answer this but the question is; how much work and what work do you do with prospective savers who aren't ready to help them become ready?

Kimberly: We work with a lot of outreach partners who have clients we know are not ready right now for the program and a lot of it is giving them the message that the program is there and will be when they are ready. When they start to see that it is possible to buy a home, go to school or start that business and there is support to help them with that, we see changes in behavior. They see that end goal as possible and they start preparing for it now. So we've met with a lot of clients who were coming out of transitional housing or were recently homeless and they'll come and learn about the program and then they even meet with an asset counselor and start getting ideas of what they need to do to get ready. Then I'll see the name come back around in two years and they are really ready to purchase that home or go to school. I think a lot of the messaging and to give them tools and resources to help them take whatever next step they need to take helps but we don't spend a lot of time handholding. When they come to us we refer them to the appropriate partner to help them with credit issues or employment but we don't do that ourselves. We refer them to the appropriate partner that helps them take that next step.

Jimmy: Just to piggy back off that; Kim, do you have a lot of people that come back when they are initially denied and are they successful?

Kim: Most of them don't get to the point where the application is denied. They may meet with the asset counselor and then never apply. We may not even know about it. We just know that they came to an info session and disappeared. But we've had some that come back after two years. We had one lady who was really mad at us that we wouldn't let her save for homeownership since she had a previous foreclosure not cleared up. She came back three times and asset counselors said no every time but then finally, two years later she had shown up again, she had cleaned up her credit, increased her income and was a perfect candidate for homeownership. It took her time to realize she had to do that work before she could buy the house.

Jimmy: Thank you. It looks like that's all the time we have for questions. I am sorry we didn't have more time. Here is the speakers' contact information if you have any questions we didn't get to today. Feel free to shoot them an e-mail. We'll be more than happy to help you guys out. I will leave that up there for a couple seconds. I will also be sending this presentation in a follow up email so again you will have the contact information.

And last but not least here is the contact information for the AFI Resource Center. You can find a wealth of information on running an AFI IDA program there, so definitely check out the website.

Finally, before you leave today, we'd like to ask you to respond to the evaluation question on your screen that's going to pop up on your screen right now. It will only take a few seconds and will help us assess the quality of this webinar. Please take a moment to submit your feedback before you sign off. Thanks everyone for joining us and have a nice weekend.