

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Multnomah County, we are piloting the Family Independence Initiative (FII). Through FII, families with low incomes can build opportunity and community through trust, support, collaboration, and access to resources. FII is fueled by families making connections, rather than relying on more isolated services. Peer groups share resources, provide support to one another, act as role models and families set their own goals. The desired outcome is financial stability and increased assets. FII creates an environment where families are recognized as experts in their own life. They can come together, grow and thrive.

## THE CHALLENGE

### POVERTY

In Multnomah County, poverty is severe and growing. Communities of color, immigrants and refugees, children, single-parent households, and persons with disabilities are disproportionately impacted by poverty, with poverty rates for these populations far higher than their rates in the population as a whole. Multnomah County has an opportunity to pilot new approaches to persistent issues.

### SOCIAL NETWORKS

A new generation of research strongly suggests that both positive outcomes (financial well-being) and negative outcomes (poverty) travel through social networks. These networks influence various life aspects such as health, economic mobility, and status attainment. Emerging research also highlights that providing cash to families with low incomes has considerable long-lasting positive impact on incomes, employment, health, and education. Current assistance programs often address people's short-term poverty needs, however, barriers still exist for long-term well-being and economic security.



**MORE THAN ONE-THIRD  
OF MULTNOMAH COUNTY  
RESIDENTS DO NOT HAVE  
ENOUGH INCOME TO BE ABLE  
TO MEET THEIR BASIC NEEDS.**

## STRATEGIES

Rooted in the principles and methods of the nationally recognized FII, this project proposes to advance methods for families with low incomes to organize into peer affinity groups, re-ignite resource sharing (including financial resources), provide mutual support, shift control to families, and provide peer role modeling. The program focuses on Multnomah County families who were long-term Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) participants who are either newly employed, living at or below 37% of the Federal Poverty level, or at risk of enrolling in or returning to TANF (*families often return to TANF within 12 months*). By maintaining successful employment, avoiding in enrollment or reenrollment in TANF, families are better able to achieve financial stability and build financial assets.

**COLLECTIVELY, FIVE PRINCIPLES  
REPRESENT THE OVERARCHING  
GUIDEPOSTS FOR PROGRAM  
IMPLEMENTATION.**

1. Encourage families to turn to each other for support and inspiration, rather than professional staff.
2. Fund families, in addition to programs.
3. Focus on family strengths, not needs.
4. Give families choice and control.
5. Provide ways for users of programs to provide feedback and hold programs accountable.

## PARTNERS

### FUNDING & CONTRACT PARTNERS

- DHS - District 2 and central DHS (funders and key partner)
- National Family Independence Initiative
- Meyer Memorial Trust

### STRATEGY AND WORKGROUP PARTNERS

An FII workgroup has been meeting regularly to ensure project development, strategy outreach, and fidelity to the model.

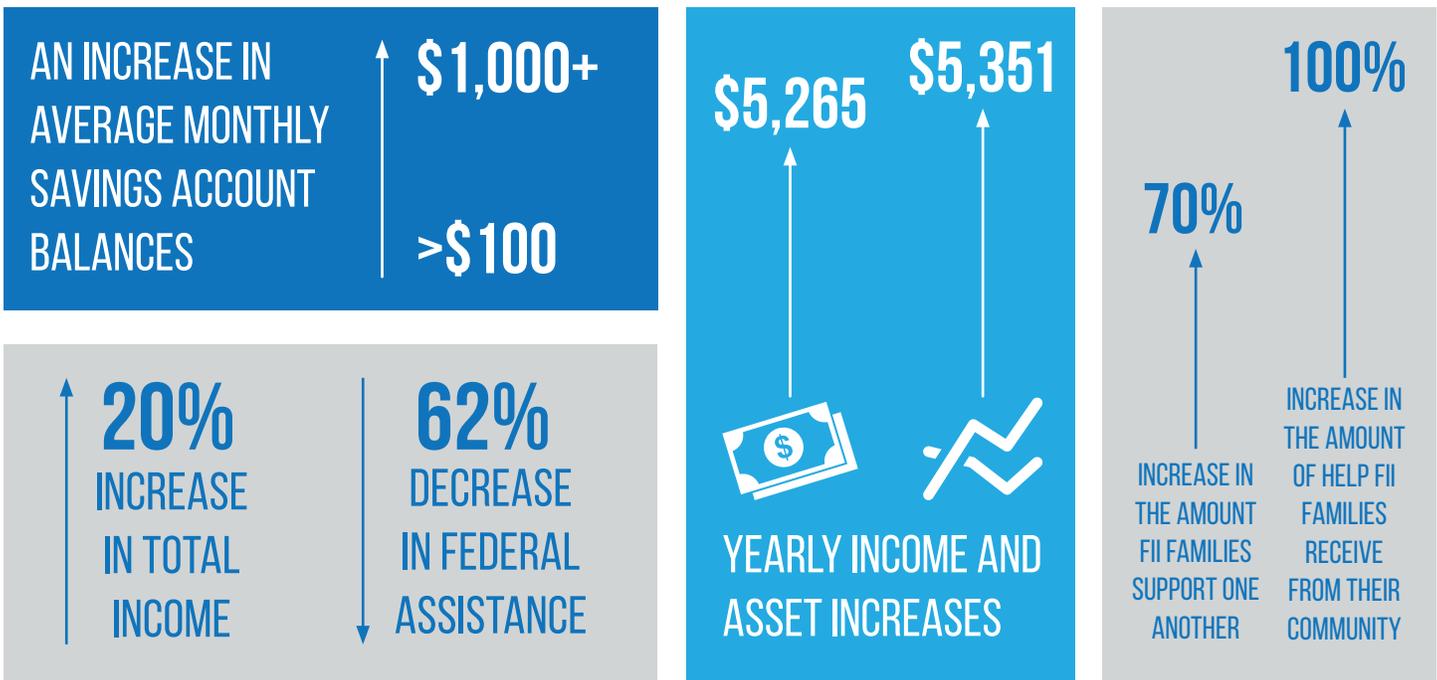
- DHS District 2 and central DHS
- Family Independence Initiative
- Home Forward
- Early Learning Multnomah

## FUNDING

Multnomah County FII implementation is supported through a public private partnership with DHS TANF Reinvestment funds and Meyer Memorial Trust funds, totalling \$456,860.

## RESULTS

Families are currently being recruited, so local data will be available in FY18. Nationally, with FII, an average family reports the following results over the course of a year:



## LOOKING FORWARD

This is a timely moment to implement, test, and evaluate a new way of delivering services to populations in Multnomah County that face the greatest barriers while supporting the long-term vision for increased opportunity and reduced multigenerational poverty. DHS anticipates incorporating the learning from FII in to other county anti-poverty systems of care.

