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MAY 3, 2016](#)

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Brian J. Stiger
Director

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS

Members of the Board

Hilda L. Solis
Mark Ridley-Thomas
Sheila Kuehl
Don Knabe
Michael D. Antonovich

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

May 3, 2016

TO: Supervisor Hilda Solis, Chair
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Brian J. Stiger 
Director, Consumer and Business Affairs

REPORT ON IMPROVING FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT – ASSESSMENT OF COUNTY SERVICES (ITEM NO. 3, AGENDA OF MARCH 15, 2015)

On March 15, 2016, your Board moved to assess the feasibility of establishing a Center for Financial Empowerment (CFE) within the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) to help lift County residents out of poverty and achieve greater economic security. The motion called for, among other deliverables, an inventory and assessment of the financial empowerment offerings currently being provided by County departments.

To achieve this deliverable, DCBA convened an Inventory and Assessment workgroup comprised of County department representatives to identify and evaluate the County's current financial empowerment services, the results of which are provided in this report.

Objective

The motion called for DCBA, in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the Department of Community and Senior Services (CSS), the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), the County Librarian, the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), the Community Development Commission (CDC), and other relevant County departments, to complete an inventory and assessment of the County's current financial empowerment offerings.

Data Collection and Methodology

The Inventory and Assessment Workgroup (workgroup) developed a survey consisting of 21 questions to send to all County departments in order to learn about the County's current financial empowerment services.

Consumer Services

500 W. Temple Street, Room B-96 • Los Angeles, CA 90012-2706
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Fax (213) 687-1137 • Website: dcba.lacounty.gov

Small Business Services

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Telephone (323) 881-3964
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The survey asked departments to identify and evaluate each financial empowerment service they provide. Specifically, the survey asked for qualitative data including: a description of the service, the populations served, the methods used to market the service, and the performance metrics used.¹

Assessment Rubric

The workgroup created a rubric to assess all survey responses.² The rubric rated each financial empowerment service in five key areas:

- Accessibility: the number of languages in which the service is offered, the service delivery locations, and how many participants use the service;
- Quality: the effectiveness of the service and how it relates to financial empowerment;
- Performance Measures: effective use of metrics and data to measure the program results;
- Marketing and Outreach: how the program is marketed and are these methods successful; and
- Program Delivery: whether information is delivered to participants in a useful way, such as workshops, counseling, and educational materials.

The evaluation areas were related to questions asked in the survey. Each area received a rating on a scale from one to four, with one denoting “under development” and four meaning “exemplary.” The scores were totaled for an overall rating for each financial empowerment service with a rating of twenty as the highest possible score.

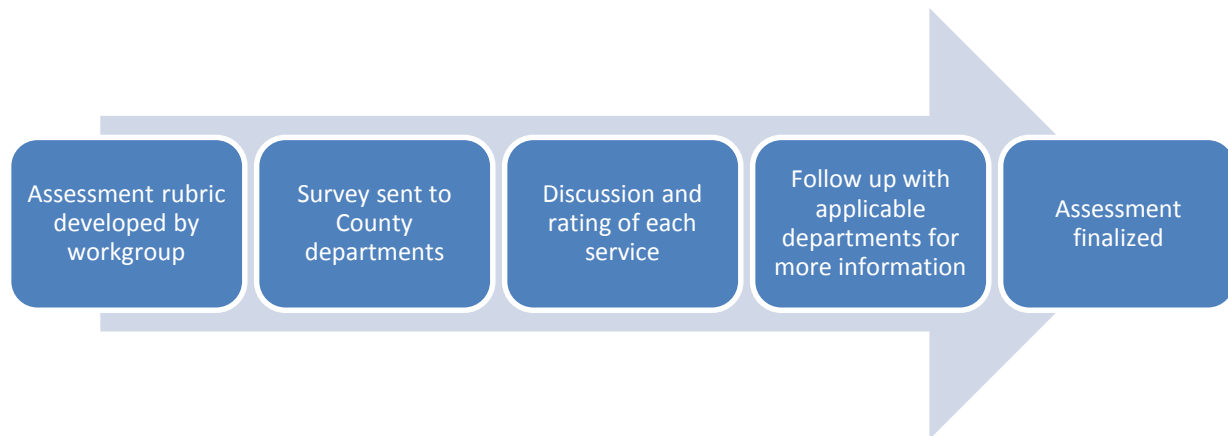
Fourteen departments responded to the survey indicating that they offered one or more financial empowerment services.

Assessment Process

On April 13, 2016, the Inventory and Assessment Workgroup met to rate each financial empowerment service using the assessment rubric. Three teams of four people evaluated and rated each service. To ensure objectivity, work group members did not review or rate the survey response from their own department. During the evaluation process, the teams also determined if individual follow-up interviews were needed to further assess the service. The entire workgroup discussed common trends amongst the services, the opportunities for growth, and any other notable observations.

¹ For a complete list of survey questions, see Appendix A.

² For the rubric used, see Appendix B.



From April 13th through April 18th, DCBA conducted the follow-up interviews with County departments where the workgroup suggested additional information was needed to finalize the ratings.

Results

Based on the workgroup's analysis of the data, we learned that County departments offer 46 unique financial literacy related services. The inventory and assessment helped to identify the robust services the County currently offers, and provided insight into how the County could coordinate and align these services to better serve Los Angeles County residents.

Inventory of Services Being Offered

Financial empowerment services identified ranged from tax preparation assistance and credit repair to tenant and homeowner counseling and assistance. Departments also provide general financial wellness information and job skills training, among other services serving specific subsets of the population.

The survey found that a majority (42 of the 46) of services offered are being provided directly to the public by front-facing departments; three of the financial empowerment services identified are provided to County employees for personal or professional development; and one is provided as a train-the-trainer service.³

In terms of language availability of the services, the workgroup found that 18% of the County's financial empowerment services are offered in languages other than English and Spanish.

³ For a complete listing of all financial empowerment services the County provides, see Appendix C.

i. Service delivery to targeted populations

Many services are targeted toward specific populations as opposed to all County residents. For example, eight of the services are targeted towards older adults. Other targeted populations include youth and teens, CalWORKs participants and veterans.

Foster youth were identified as the target population for five services throughout the County. This population is particularly susceptible to financial fraud as their personal identifying information passes through the hands of many caretakers and guardians before they reach the age of majority.

ii. Income tax assistance

The assessment revealed that many departments work to provide Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) or Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) outreach and applications. These departments include the LACOE, DPSS, CSS, DCFS, Public Library and DCBA.

iii. Direct and Indirect Services

The survey showed that some services are provided in a “train-the-trainer” format. For example, DCBA provides financial empowerment training to DPSS workers who assist CalWORKs participants so that workers can better educate their clients on making smart financial decisions. Also, some services are provided to County employees but not to recipients of County services. For example, the Museum of Natural History provides both retirement planning services to their employees and an employee assistance program which includes financial counseling.

Assessment of Services Being Offered

The workgroup noted several trends in its assessment. The County currently offers a broad variety of financial empowerment services and is effective at targeting specific subsets of the County. The inventory and assessment revealed untapped partnership opportunities across County departments and areas where marketing and outreach can be enhanced.

i. Strengths

The assessment revealed that the County provides several layers of financial empowerment services; from foundational services, such as opening a bank account and learning to balance a budget, to higher level programs such as, home buying assistance, tax preparation, and train-the-trainer opportunities.

The County has several essential services for foster and transition-aged youth.

Not only do several County departments partner to provide foster youth with basic financial education around skills such as money management, purchasing a car and renting an apartment, but departments partner to assist foster youth who are victims of identity theft to remove all negative reporting from their credit reports.

ii. Notable Observations

The assessment revealed that the County offers 46 unique financial empowerment services through a variety of interdepartmental partnerships.

The workgroup was surprised to note that many nonpublic-facing departments, such as LACOE, are still working with the public by partnering with other County departments.

The workgroup identified the financial empowerment-related services and their target populations as an opportunity to simultaneously provide a direct Countywide financial empowerment curriculum. The workgroup noted that a financial empowerment curriculum could reach clients at the same time as they are receiving other County services. For example, LACOE partners with DPSS to offer job skills training, which would be one opportunity to also teach a general financial empowerment curriculum.

iii. Areas of opportunity

Through the inventory and assessment, the workgroup found that many services should be provided in additional languages. Several services are provided in English only, and half of the services that are provided in two languages are provided in English and Spanish only.

Additionally, the workgroup evaluated the data each program measures to track and report their progress. The survey asked respondents to identify what metrics, if any, are used to measure their program's success. The survey revealed that 30% of the County's programs have developed standardized metrics to track their progress. The workgroup identified enhanced data analytics as an area for opportunity.

The workgroup also noted that many of the existing programs are voluntary with little incentive for the public to participate. Departments offer workshops; from planning for college to social security and Medicare presentations; however, these workshops are offered to those who voluntarily choose to attend them.

The workgroup remarked that few programs have targeted marketing and outreach efforts. As a result, the general public might not be aware of the services being offered. For example, many departments denoted "word-of-mouth" as the primary marketing method. Some of the County's financial empowerment services are offered to targeted populations who already access the County for assistance.

The workgroup observed that the outreach for services to specific groups is limited because these groups are already accessing the County for assistance. This includes GAIN participants, CalWORKs participants, veterans, or foster youth.

As discussed, several departments are actively involved in VITA and EITC services. The coordination of these efforts is essential as the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) estimates low-moderate income County residents regularly fail to claim more than \$300 million in Federal EITC funds each year. Combining the State and the Federal EITC rebates could increase the income of families earning under \$7,000 per year by nearly 75%.

Finally, the assessment revealed that many services utilize standard presentation techniques such as oral presentations and PowerPoint. The workgroup determined that augmenting traditional presentation techniques with new technologies such as webinars or virtual counseling would improve the accessibility of some services.

Recommendations

After reviewing the survey results and completing the inventory and assessment, DCBA recommends the creation of a coordinated marketing and outreach campaign to raise awareness of all services being offered, enhanced metrics to measure the success of Countywide programs, increased partnerships between County departments to offer financial empowerment, improved use of technology, and a more detailed inventory and in-depth assessment of the County's current services.

Outreach and Marketing Campaign

DCBA recommends the establishment of a Countywide marketing campaign to inform the public of the financial empowerment services available and where and how to access them. DCBA would consult with relevant County departments in establishing a culturally competent marketing and outreach campaign.

This campaign would consist of a financial empowerment tagline to be used by all entities offering financial empowerment services, as well as a coordinated financial empowerment "brand" and logo.

Metrics

The inventory and assessment revealed that a small percentage of the County's services use standardized metrics to track their progress. DCBA recommends developing a set of performance measures that can be used throughout all programs in the County to better measure the success of the County programs and the effectiveness of the CFE.

Increased Partnerships

The assessment showed that there are opportunities to offer a County financial empowerment curriculum along with existing services. DCBA recommends exploring departmental partnership opportunities so that financial empowerment can be offered in conjunction with other services and residents can easily access the services best suited to them. This would include the creation of a Countywide network so that partners could easily refer and offer recipients the services best suited to their needs.

Technology

DCBA proposes using technology to enhance financial empowerment services. This would enable residents who are not able to access a physical service center to still receive valuable assistance. Services could be offered on a centralized County CFE website.

Detailed Inventory and In-Depth Assessment

After completing an initial inventory and assessment of County services, DCBA suggests a more detailed inventory and assessment of key financial empowerment services. This would enable the workgroup and DCBA to observe how services are delivered, identify any potential partnership opportunities, and the needs of specific target populations. This would enhance the CFE's referral network and service offerings.

Conclusion

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to complete a Countywide inventory and assessment of the current financial empowerment offerings for your Board. DCBA will respond to the third part of your motion regarding the feasibility of developing a Center for Financial Empowerment in a separate report to your Board on or before May 16, 2016. Should you have any questions, please contact me at (213) 974-9750.

cc: Chief Executive Officer
Department of Community and Senior Services
Department of Public Social Services
County Librarian
Los Angeles County Office of Education
Department of Children and Family Services
Community Development Commission
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs
Treasurer Tax Collector

APPENDIX A
County Survey Questions

Los Angeles County Center for Financial Empowerment Survey

For the purposes of this survey, we are defining “financial empowerment” to include a broad range of services including: financial education classes, first-time homebuyer assistance, credit counseling, rental assistance, loans, tax preparation, scholarships, asset building programs, individual development account (IDA) programs, or other financial self-sufficiency programs.

- 1) Please list all of the financial empowerment services provided by your Department.
- 2) For each financial empowerment service:
 - Please describe the service.
 - Who is the target population for this service
 - Older Adults
 - Foster Youth
 - Homeless
 - Veterans
 - Immigrants
 - Unbanked or Under-banked
 - Disabled
 - Other
 - In what language(s) is this service offered?
 - English
 - Spanish
 - Chinese
 - Korean
 - Tagalog
 - Vietnamese
 - Farsi
 - Armenian
 - Japanese
 - Russian
 - Other
 - Who are the partners, if any, that you work with to provide this service?
 - How do you deliver this service?
 - Presentation/workshop
 - In person counseling
 - Resource Fair
 - Online presentation
 - Website
 - Other

- Where can this service be accessed?
 - Public Counter
 - Public presentation
 - County Office
 - Through a community partner
 - Online counseling
 - Through an online application
 - Other
- How do you market your service?
 - Print Media
 - Social Media
 - Television Media
 - Radio
 - Community Resource Fair
 - Department Website
 - Word of Mouth
 - Posters
 - Through other County departments
 - Other
- How many people were served last fiscal year by this effort?
 - 0-100
 - 101-500
 - 500-1000
 - 1000-1500
 - 1500-2000
 - 2000-3000
 - 3000-4000
 - 4000-5000
 - 5000+
- What additional performance metrics, if any, do you use to track the program's progress?
- How do you collect this information?
 - Clients self-report their progress
 - Client Survey
 - Tracking credit scores
 - Tracking measurable data
 - Other

- How effective is this service at financially empowering your target population on a scale of 1 to 4 (1 being not effective, 4 being very effective)?
 - How is this service funded?
 - Net County Cost
 - Grant
 - Other (text field)
 - How much funding is required for this service?
 - What is the staff allocation for this service? What resources are required?
 - Do you provide written materials as part of your service?
 - Yes
 - No
- 3) Please select the three most urgent financial needs of the clients you serve:
- Opening a bank account
 - Financial education classes
 - Budgeting classes
 - Building credit
 - Credit repair
 - Obtaining a loan
 - First-time homebuyer assistance
 - Credit counseling
 - Rental assistance
 - Tax preparation
 - Scholarships
 - Asset building programs
 - Individual development account (IDA) programs
 - Other
- 4) Please provide any additional information regarding your financial empowerment services that have not already been captured?

APPENDIX B
Assessment Rubric

Financial Empowerment Program Assessment Rubric- Draft

Department Name:				Name of Program:	
Score Levels	Under Development (1)	Developing (2)	Proficient (3)	Exemplary (4)	Score
Provides accessible service to participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Program is provided in one language, at one location, services a low number of participants, and/or schedule is not flexible	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provides program in at least two languages, at limited locations or access points, services low but growing number of participants, and/or there is some flexibility in scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provides program in two to four languages, at several locations or access points, services a moderate number of people served, and there is flexibility in scheduling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provides program in 5 or more languages, at various locations and access points, serves a high amount of participants, and there is flexibility of scheduling	
Program staff quality and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff training for services provided is minimalAssistance to participants is in-direct and/or deficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff training for services provided is fairAssistance to participants is direct and needs additional resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff training for services provided is moderateAssistance to participants is direct, constant and is meeting standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff training for services provided is exceptionalAssistance to participants is direct, constant and is exceeding the standard	
Effectively uses metrics/data/ performance measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Program does not have a metrics system (i.e. surveys, case management system, performance database)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Program has a metrics system (i.e. surveys, case management system, performance database) but does not have the ability to extract or analyze data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Program has a metrics system (i.e. surveys, case management system, performance database) but is not efficiently or constantly extracting or analyzing data	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Program has a standardized metrics system in place and is utilized effectively	
Resources available to participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Types of resources available to participants are minimal (i.e. educational materials, workshops, classes, counseling, tax preparation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Types of resources available to participants are fair (i.e. educational materials, workshops, classes, counseling, tax preparation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Types of resources available to participants are moderate (i.e. educational materials, workshops, classes, counseling, tax preparation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Types of resources available to participants are extensive (i.e. educational materials, workshops, classes, counseling, tax preparation)	
Marketing and outreach effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of outlets the program utilizes to market program is minimal comparable to the low amount of participants served.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Number of outlets the program utilizes to market program is fair comparable to the fair amount of participants served.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Program moderately utilizes marketing and outreach strategies resulting in moderate amounts of participants served.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Program successfully utilizes outreach and marketing outlets resulting in high volume of participants served	
COMMENTS:					TOTAL SCORE:

APPENDIX C
County Inventory Listing

Inventory of Current County Financial Empowerment Services, May 2016

	Department	Partner County Department	Service	Description
1	Arts Commission	N/A	Organizational finance, budgeting, and fundraising classes	The commission provides free courses to member grantees to learn how to better manage their organizations funds
2	Beaches and Harbors	Fire	Financial aid for Water Awareness, Training, Education & Recreation (W.A.T.E.R)	Beaches and Harbor and Fire department provide financial aid (fee waivers) for water safety and sailing instruction classes.
3	Children and Family Services	N/A	Individualized Transition Skills Program (ITSP)	Contractor provides one-on-one Life Skills training to youth that encompasses financial responsibility, credit checks, housing options and scholarship opportunities.
4	Children and Family Services	N/A	ILP University Classes	Classroom training on financial literacy/money management including budgeting, how to open a bank account, how to write a check, balancing the checkbook, savings accounts, direct deposit, credit cards and interest, tracking your spending, budgeting the SILP income.
5	Children and Family Services	HUD, Mental Health	Housing Services	In collaboration with the Transitional Housing Program (THP) and HUD grants, they are contracted with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA) for 175 beds and supportive services for ILP eligible foster youth, and ILP eligible youth self-directed requests for rental assistance. The transitional housing services program includes independent living skills, education, employment support and case management services to transition age youth 18-21.

Inventory of Current County Financial Empowerment Services, May 2016

	Department	Partner County Department	Service	Description
6	Children and Family Services	Public Social Services	Transitional Subsidized Employment Readiness	Services are obtained via MOU with the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) and their contractor the South Bay Workforce Investment Board (SBWIB) and their sub-contractors to provide Transitional Subsidized Employment (TSE) services to current and former foster youth.
7	Children and Family Services	N/A	Scholarships	Provided to youth who graduate from High School and have a significant GPA and are enrolled in college or university. The scholarships are provided through the ILP program and private donors.
8	Children and Family Services	N/A	VITA	Department provides free tax preparation service to all eligible Los Angeles County families.
9	Children and Family Services	N/A	Financial Literacy Workshops	Classes provided to educate the community on finances including budgeting, credit, bank accounts, savings, etc.
10	Children and Family Services	N/A	Adult Job Readiness	Assist adults in preparing to obtain employment including resume writing, interview skills etc.
11	Community Development Commission	N/A	First time homebuyer and housing rehabilitation	The department offers a homeownership program that requires participants to attend a HUD approved home buyer class.
12	Community Development Commission	N/A	Family Self Sufficiency Program	The department provides a Family Self Sufficiency program to public housing residents or Section 8 recipients. The program includes various money management and career counseling courses.

Inventory of Current County Financial Empowerment Services, May 2016

	Department	Partner County Department	Service	Description
13	Community Senior Services	N/A	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation's (FDIC) "Smart Financial Education Program"	The program teaches recipients about: banking and checking, setting financial goals, and the concept of paying yourself first
14	Community Senior Services	N/A	FDIC "Money Smart for All Ages Curriculum"	The program helps individuals outside the financial mainstream create positive banking relationship and boost their money skills. Topics include: borrowing basics, paying for college and how to buy a car
15	Community Senior Services	N/A	Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)	Provide information on this benefit for working people who have low to moderate income.
16	Community Senior Services	N/A	Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and First Time Home Buyer Workshops	The department provides free tax assistance provided to families \$53,000 or less.
17	Community Senior Services	N/A	Transportation Assistance through Taxi Vouchers and Bus Tokens	The department provides taxi voucher and bus token subsidies to seniors to assist with transportation.
18	Consumer and Business Affairs	N/A	Debt Collection Workshop	Presentations provide litigants with information on how to respond to a debt collection lawsuit, debt collection practices, how to set-up a payment plan and wage garnishments.

Inventory of Current County Financial Empowerment Services, May 2016

	Department	Partner County Department	Service	Description
19	Consumer and Business Affairs	DPSS	Financial Education Training for GAIN Services Workers (GSWs)	A one-day training was provided to GSWs by the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) based on "Your Money, Your Goals" curriculum developed by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.
20	Consumer and Business Affairs	DPSS	Financial Literacy Workshops	Presentations to assist the welfare-to-work (GAIN) Job Clubs. This is a pilot program from 2015. It is in the process of obtaining an MOU with Consumer and Business Affairs to continue the program.
21	Consumer and Business Affairs	Children and Family Services, Probation	Foster Youth Financial Education	Presentations teach foster youth about managing money, purchasing a car, and renting an apartment, and scholarship scams.
22	Consumer and Business Affairs	Children and Family Services, Probation	Foster Youth Identity Theft	The program assists foster youth who are victims of identity theft remove all negative reporting from their credit reports.
23	Consumer and Business Affairs	N/A	LifeSmarts	In partnership with the National Consumer League, the department coordinates statewide competition on financial literacy and life skills tools for students.
24	Consumer and Business Affairs	Community Senior Services	Smarter Senior Forums	The department in partnership with other County and external agencies educate seniors and their caretakers on Common Senior Consumer issues, Elder Abuse, real estate concerns, and other important issues affecting seniors.

Inventory of Current County Financial Empowerment Services, May 2016

	Department	Partner County Department	Service	Description
25	Consumer and Business Affairs	Public Library	Credit and financial education for teens	Presentations for teens on various subjects regarding financial readiness such as consumer basics, budgeting, credit and debt, checking and savings accounts.
26	Consumer and Business Affairs	N/A	Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)	The department has conducted a comprehensive outreach campaign to create awareness amongst eligible residents of LA County of the State and Federal Earned Income Tax Credit.
27	Consumer and Business Affairs	Public Library, Treasurer Tax Collector	Small Business Workshops	Small Business Saturdays Workshops geared towards new business owners.
28	Human Resources	N/A	Monthly Financial Wellness Webinar	Financial wellness webinars provide information on budgeting, preparing for taxes, buying a home, credit, ID theft, retirement planning, paying for college and money basics.
29	Human Resources	N/A	Financial Wellness four series course	Financial Wellness series consists of four classes on Building a Foundation, Creating and Managing Wealth, Establishing a Retirement Income Stream, and Making the Most of What you Have.
30	LA County Office of Education	Public Social Services	Greater Avenue for Independence (GAIN)	Department provides job skills training and budgeting assistance training to the chronically unemployed with dependents receiving aid through DPSS.

Inventory of Current County Financial Empowerment Services, May 2016

	Department	Partner County Department	Service	Description
31	LA County Office of Education	Public Social Services	General Relief Opportunities for Work (GROW)	Department provides Job skills training to the chronically unemployed without dependents receiving aid through DPSS.
32	LA County Office of Education	Public Social Services	Workforce Innovative and Opportunity Act (WIOA)	Life skills workshops and paid work experience for youth on CalWORKs, Foster Youth and disconnected youth ages 16-24.
33	Military and Veteran Affairs	N/A	Career Development Initiative (CDI)	Connects veterans with job opportunities, creating a career plan including resume building, interview preparation, job certification training and job retention.
34	Military and Veteran Affairs	N/A	Supportive Services for Veteran's and their Families (SSVF)	Promote housing stability to low or below low income veteran families transitioning to permanent housing.
35	Military and Veteran Affairs	N/A	Outside The Wire (OTW)	Provide clinical counseling, peer support, resource information and referrals to mental health professionals for veterans with psychological injuries.
36	Museum of Natural History	N/A	Employee Assistance Program	The program provides varied support services to museum staff and their families. One of the components of the program is financial counseling.

Inventory of Current County Financial Empowerment Services, May 2016

	Department	Partner County Department	Service	Description
37	Museum of Natural History	N/A	Retirement planning services	This is a one-on-one personal consulting program including budgeting and other financial services.
38	Public Library	N/A	Tax Preparation Assistance	VITA and AARP Volunteers help low income individuals prepare their tax returns.
39	Public Library	Community Senior Services, and County District Attorney's Office	Elder Fraud Prevention Workshops	Presentations to help prevent older adult financial abuse. Topics include: "Scam Busters: Fraud Prevention Tips Every Senior Should Know," "Identifying and Preventing Financial Exploitation," and "Elder Abuse and Financial Scams."
40	Public Library	N/A	College & Financial Aid Workshops	Presentations for college bound youth on financial aid, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), scholarships and college preparation.
41	Public Library	N/A	Social Security & Medicare Workshops	Presentations cover fraud, especially amongst seniors; maximizing benefits: how/when to apply, survivor rights and coordinating benefits with other retirement income.
42	Public Library	N/A	Credit & Financial Management for Adults	Presentations on how to avoid the current financial scams; establishing and maintaining good credit and keeping a budget; provide information on credit/debit cards, loans, and banking accounts; and learning about different types of financial plans and accounts.
43	Public Library	Housing Authority	Tenant and Homeowner Housing Rights	Presentations by the Housing Rights Center, these presentations for landlords and tenants covered fair housing laws, evictions, rent increases, notices

Inventory of Current County Financial Empowerment Services, May 2016

	Department	Partner County Department	Service	Description
				to vacate, security deposits, repairs, and disability rights.
44	Public Library	Assessor, outside partners	Small Business Workshops	Presentations on “Be a Networking Champion,” and Word Press Meet Up for entrepreneurs and business owners. Topics also include starting a small business, target marketing, access to capital, and financial management.
45	Public Social Services	N/A	VITA	Department provides free federal and state tax preparation at DPSS offices.
46	Regional Planning	N/A	"Buying Property? What to know before you buy"	This is a presentation and informational brochure designed to educate property buyers about zoning regulations to avoid purchasing a property with existing violations and become responsible for correcting the violations.



Brian J. Stiger
Director

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AND BUSINESS AFFAIRS

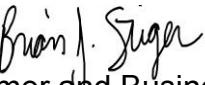
Members of the Board

Hilda L. Solis
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"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

DATE: May 31, 2016

TO: Supervisor Hilda Solis, Chair
Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Don Knabe
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: Brian J. Stiger 
Director, Consumer and Business Affairs

REPORT ON THE PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF A COUNTYWIDE CENTER FOR FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT (ITEM NO. 3, AGENDA OF MARCH 15, 2016)

On March 15, 2016, your Board adopted a motion co-authored by Supervisors Kuehl and Chair Solis to assess the feasibility of establishing a Center for Financial Empowerment (CFE) within the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA) to help lift County residents out of poverty and achieve greater economic security.

The motion called for an inventory and assessment of the financial empowerment offerings currently being provided by County departments and external stakeholders; input from experts on strategies, best practices, and performance metrics to coordinate internal and external financial empowerment services; and a proposal to develop a new CFE.

Pursuant to the motion, DCBA submitted an inventory and assessment of the current financial empowerment services provided by County departments to your Board on May 3, 2016. This report responds to the remaining elements of the motion and includes a proposal to establish the CFE as a two-year pilot program for your consideration.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The motion called for DCBA, in consultation with relevant County departments, other governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, and community credit unions to seek input on strategies, tools, best practices, and performance metrics for the successful implementation of a coordinated internal and external approach to delivering financial empowerment services throughout the County.

Consumer Services

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This report provides strategic objectives and recommendations on how the CFE can coordinate and align the County's existing efforts with external stakeholders. Additionally, it includes a description of the proposed CFE service offerings, an inventory and assessment of the empowerment efforts provided by external stakeholders, marketing and outreach strategies, and the resources and funding to launch the CFE. DCBA will partially fund the pilot with existing funds and secure matching funds through a public private partnership. DCBA does not anticipate requesting additional Net County Costs during the pilot.

In developing this proposal, DCBA convened a diverse focus group of recognized subject matter experts representing financial institutions, non-profits, and local government. The workgroup developed a strategy to provide services to a wide range of consumers while focusing on specific, targeted populations to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot.

Summary of External Survey

DCBA sent a survey to the City of Los Angeles and non-profit agencies in Los Angeles County known to provide financial empowerment services to gather information about the range of current service offerings. The survey requested: types of financial empowerment services, populations served, marketing methods, and performance metrics used.¹

The survey revealed that the providers most frequently serve: families with school-aged children, immigrants, unbanked or under-banked, youth and young adults, and non-English speakers.² Additionally, several respondents reported linking financial literacy and counseling services with other community services and programs. This allows organizations to leverage services and provide cross referrals between programs. Finally, the survey showed that 57% of the organizations providing services offer Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA).³

CENTER FOR FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT PURPOSE

DCBA's research was instrumental in crafting the purpose and structure of the CFE. The CFE's proposed purpose is to coordinate and align the financial empowerment services provided by government, academia, non-profit and for-profit sectors to improve the financial capability of low-income consumers residing in Los Angeles County. The CFE must successfully achieve the following strategic objectives to fulfill its purpose:

¹ For a complete list of survey questions, see Appendix A.

² For an inventory of service providers, see Appendix B.

³ For a complete summary and analysis of survey results, see Appendix C.

- Build strategic partnerships with local, state, and federal governments, academia, non-profit, and financial institutions;
- Implement a centralized approach to services beginning with targeted populations and extending to the broader community;
- Create a marketing and outreach campaign to engage diverse communities and inform the public about available financial empowerment services; and
- Develop a set of metrics to measure the outcomes of existing County financial empowerment services and the results of the two-year pilot.

Coordinating and Aligning Services

The CFE will meet regularly with County stakeholders and subject matter experts to share updates, discuss best practices, and leverage resources to strengthen and align County financial empowerment services. The stakeholders will assist and advise DCBA and the CFE on operational matters and policy issues affecting the field of financial empowerment.

Target Populations

For purposes of the pilot, the CFE will focus its efforts on serving youth between 14 – 24 years of age with an emphasis on foster and transition-age youth as well as families and individuals who are eligible for the Federal and State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). These populations were selected based on their recognized need for financial empowerment services, the opportunity to leverage existing County resources to help change behavior, and the ability to measure outcomes.

PROPOSED SERVICES TO THE TARGET POPULATIONS

The CFE will further develop and coordinate the following service offerings to the identified target populations.

Services to Youth

In addition to coordinating with internal and external partners, the CFE will provide the following services:

- Serve as the coordinator for the LifeSmarts Program. The program is a year-long training and competition directed towards high school-age youth to promote financial literacy and consumer savviness;
- Educate youth about trusted no-cost or low-cost financial products and programs including savings and checking accounts;
- Promote access to resources to help students complete their post-secondary education;

- Expand presentations to foster and probation youth to include topics on purchasing a car, renting an apartment, avoiding scholarship scams and other consumer issues; and
- Partner with the Department of Community and Senior Services (CSS) and the City of Los Angeles to expand on the financial literacy information offered as part of the County's existing summer youth program.

Services to EITC-Eligible Residents

The CFE will work with partners to:

- Increase the number of VITA trained County employees who can prepare tax returns for low-income residents;
- Host a signature Countywide VITA event to serve EITC-eligible families and individuals during tax season to provide free tax preparation services; and
- Connect clients to financial counseling opportunities and safe banking products.

PROPOSED SERVICES FOR ALL COUNTY RESIDENTS

The CFE will offer the following services to residents throughout the County.

Financial Empowerment Services Directory

The CFE will create, coordinate, and disseminate an online and printed directory of County services to help the public better navigate and access service offerings. This will also serve as a referral directory for internal and external partners to use when assisting their clients.

Leverage Social Services

The CFE will work with the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) to incorporate a financial literacy curriculum into appropriate DPSS programs such as CalWorks. Additionally, the CFE will train DPSS Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) workers in a "train-the-trainer" format who in turn can teach financial empowerment concepts to their clients.

Promote Policies to Ensure Safe Financial Products

The CFE will work to support safe financial products to protect consumers from fraud, scams, and unfair business practices. Through DCBA's Public Policy unit, the CFE will support legislation and policy initiatives to increase access to the financial mainstream for all and will promote widespread financial education.

MARKETING AND OUTREACH STRATEGY

DCBA has been a trusted community resource for over 40 years. DCBA will develop campaign messaging that is informative, simple and nonjudgmental that engages the diverse communities that encompass the County. This strategy will include the components detailed below to reach a broad and diverse audience.

This strategy is tailored to a two-year pilot program which will focus on financial empowerment services by partnering with County departments and external partners. Outreach will focus on promoting State and Federal EITC, VITA services, and youth financial education to the target populations.

CFE Webpage

The CFE will develop an online webpage for County residents to help improve the accessibility of reliable financial information. This will include content on a variety of financial products and services. Content will be produced in multiple languages.

Leverage Partnerships

To ensure the CFE's marketing and outreach is culturally competent, DCBA will partner with County departments, non-profit organizations, local government agencies and financial institutions to use their expertise of communicating with diverse Los Angeles County communities. The partners will also assist in disseminating campaign materials in appropriate languages.

Targeted Outreach

DCBA will engage in specific outreach activities to EITC-eligible County residents, youth and young adults.

i. VITA and EITC Campaign

In an effort to increase the accessibility of free tax preparation and awareness of State and Federal EITC for low-to-moderate income County residents, the County's CFE will:

- Create a paid advertising campaign including transit, online, and radio advertising;
- Secure earned media to reach diverse and multicultural communities throughout the County;
- Develop a social media campaign using Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram;
- Develop a webpage on DCBA website dedicated to the campaign; and
- Attend financial empowerment events throughout Los Angeles County.

ii. Youth Campaign

The CFE will promote LifeSmarts, the Summer Youth Jobs program, and the financial empowerment of youth served by County social services. In collaboration with partners, the CFE will:

- Create a social media campaign;
- Provide financial education information on CFE webpage;
- Participate in outreach events targeted to youth;
- Collaborate with County departments that serve youth; and
- Engage with educational institutions and home school networks.

RESOURCES AND FUNDING

DCBA estimates a projected cost of approximately \$1,160,000 to operate the CFE two-year pilot. The estimated FY 2016-17 cost of the CFE is approximately \$580,000 and includes one year of funding for 2.0 budgeted positions (2.0 Consumer Affairs Representative III), one consultant to develop performance metrics, data collection methods, and advise on future service offerings. Additionally, the CFE will require \$175,000 for marketing and advertising, \$22,500 for software to track metrics and prepare presentations, and \$25,000 for website redesign through which to offer CFE services and refer potential clients to the correct organizations.

The CFE will receive a private grant in the amount of \$280,000 to help fund the first year of the two-year pilot. DCBA will seek additional funding from the private sector to assist fund the second year.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to put forth a proposal for a Countywide Center for Financial Empowerment. Should you have any questions, please contact me at (213) 974-9750.

c: Chief Executive Office
Department of Community and Senior Services
Department of Public Social Services
County Library
Los Angeles County Office of Education
Department of Children and Family Services
Community Development Commission

APPENDIX A
[List of survey questions]

Center for Financial Empowerment: Non-Profit External Stakeholders Survey

1) What financial empowerment services does your organization offer? Check all that apply.

	Choose one		Please describe the service
	Yes	No	
Financial Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Financial Coaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Matched Savings/Asset Building	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Free Income Tax Assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Credit Repair/Building	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Emergency Cash Assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Public Benefits Screening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Cradle to College Programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

2) If you provide other financial empowerment services not listed above, please list and describe them below:

3) Please select the top four (i.e. most common) target populations you assist:

- Affordable housing/section 8 residents
- Disabled
- Families with school-aged children
- Foster youth
- Homeless
- Immigrants
- Non-English speakers
- Seniors
- Unbanked/under-banked
- Veterans
- Youth/young adults
- Other - Please describe (Required):

4) Are your services available to residents throughout LA County or are they targeted to specific regions or communities (i.e. East LA, San Gabriel Valley, SPA's, zip codes, etc.)?

- Yes, our services are available to residents throughout the County
- No, our services are restricted to specific communities

5) Please describe the communities or regions you serve.

6) In what languages are the services offered? Check all that apply.

- English
- Spanish
- Korean
- Chinese (Cantonese)
- Chinese (Mandarin)
- Armenian
- Tagalog
- Vietnamese
- Thai
- Japanese
- Farsi
- Russian
- French
- German
- Other - Please describe (Required):

7) How many clients did you provide financial empowerment services to in the 2015 calendar year?

8) How many of these clients does your organization have an ongoing relationship?

9) How does your organization measure your clients' improved or increased financial empowerment?

10) How do you leverage incentives to change the behavior of your clients?

11) What innovative formats do you use to deliver your services?

12) Do you partner with banks, credit unions, and/or community development financial institutions to provide your services?

- Yes
- No

13) Please list the financial institutions you partner with and describe the nature of your partnerships:

14) How do you market your services?

- Bus advertisements
- At community resource fairs
- Organization website
- Posters
- Print media
- Radio
- Social media
- Through referral partners
- On television
- Word of mouth
- Other - Please describe (Required):

15) What obstacles do you face when trying to maintain ongoing relationships with your clients?

16) What methods or best practices do you find most effective when providing financial empowerment services?

17) What obstacles, if any, does your organization face when partnering with local government?

18) Is there any other information you would like to add?

Inventory of Non-Profit Financial Empowerment Services

AGENCY	SERVICES	DESCRIPTION	SERVICE AREA	
1	Building Skills Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial EducationFinancial CoachingFree income Tax AssistanceCredit Repair/Building	Offers work site financial classes to SEIU-USWW members regarding saving, budgeting, managing credit, and preparing for retirement.	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS
2	California Council on Economic Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial Education	Provides educators with financial literacy training and resources to help them teach personal finance to their students.	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS
3	California State University Northridge VITA Clinic	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial EducationFinancial CoachingFree income Tax Assistance	Provides educational workshops and tax preparation services to Immigrant tax payers, low income tax payers, and small business owners.	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS
4	Central City Neighborhood Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial EducationFinancial CoachingMatched Savings/ Asset BuildingFree Income Tax AssistanceCredit Repair/ Building	Advocates for low-income and vulnerable communities.	CITY OF LOS ANGELES WESTLAKE PICO-UNION

Inventory of Non-Profit Financial Empowerment Services

	AGENCY	SERVICES	DESCRIPTION	SERVICE AREA
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public Benefits Screening 		
5	Children's Bureau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Education Free Income Tax Assistance Emergency Cash Assistance 	Advancing the welfare of children and families through superior programs in foster care, adoptions, child development, parent education, mental health, research and advocacy.	DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES PICO-UNION
6	Clear Point Financial Solutions* (For Profit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Education Financial Coaching Matched Savings/ Asset Building Credit Repair/ Building Cradle to College Programs 	Helps consumers identify the causes of their financial problems and creates a plan to address them through one-on-one counseling.	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS

Inventory of Non-Profit Financial Empowerment Services

AGENCY	SERVICES	DESCRIPTION	SERVICE AREA	
7	Coalition for Responsible Community Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial Education• Financial Coaching• Free Income Tax Assistance• Credit Repair/ Building• Public Benefits Screening	Provides youth-centered community development at the Vernon Central LATTC Worksource Center and throughout supportive housing sites in South Los Angeles.	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS
8	El Centro de Ayuda	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial Education• Financial Coaching• Matched savings/ Asset Building• Free Income Tax Assistance• Credit Repair/ Building• Public Benefits Screening• Cradle to College Programs	Operates the Boyle Heights FamilySource Center which assist youth and low-income families achieve self-sufficiency.	BOYLE HEIGHTS
9	El Monte Promise Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial Education• Matched Savings/ Asset Building• Cradle to College Programs	Operates a collective impact effort in the El Monte region that helps prepare students for college at an early age.	EL MONTE

Inventory of Non-Profit Financial Empowerment Services

AGENCY	SERVICES	DESCRIPTION	SERVICE AREA	
10	Habitat for Humanity Santa Clarita and San Fernando Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial EducationFinancial CoachingCredit Repair/ BuildingEmergency Cash AssistancePublic Benefits Screening	Provides a comprehensive approach to financial stability, home ownership, and mental and emotional healing.	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS
11	Hope Through Housing Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial EducationFree Income Tax AssistanceCredit Repair/ Building	Develops affordable housing for seniors, families and youth and provides financial literacy training at their housing sites.	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS
12	Imagine LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial EducationFinancial CoachingMatched Savings/ Asset BuildingFree Income Tax AssistanceCredit Repair/ BuildingEmergency Cash AssistancePublic benefits ScreeningCradle to College Programs	Utilizes volunteer mentorship teams and existing community resources to empower families to transition from homelessness to self-sufficiency.	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS

Inventory of Non-Profit Financial Empowerment Services

AGENCY		SERVICES	DESCRIPTION	SERVICE AREA
13	International Rescue Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial EducationPublic Benefits Screening	Helps to restore health, safety, education, economic wellbeing to refugees, immigrants and asylees.	ALL OF LA COUNTY
14	Junior Achievement of Southern California	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial Education	Empower K-12 students through financial literacy, workforce readiness and entrepreneurship education.	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS
15	Koreatown Youth & Community Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial EducationFinancial CoachingMatched Savings/ Asset BuildingFree Income Tax AssistanceCredit Repair/ Building	Provides comprehensive financial support services to help residents manage their finances, increase income, reduce expenses, provide small business technical assistance, and build wealth.	KOREATOWN GREATER LOS ANGELES

Inventory of Non-Profit Financial Empowerment Services

AGENCY	SERVICES	DESCRIPTION	SERVICE AREA
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Cash Assistance • Public Benefits Screening 	
16	LIFT- Los Angeles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Coaching • Matched Savings/ Asset Building • Free income Tax Assistance 	<p>Strengthen low-income individuals and families through personal, social, and financial services.</p> <p>ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS</p>
17	Los Angeles Conservation Corps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Education • Credit Repair/ Building 	<p>Provides at-risk young adults and school-aged youth with opportunities for success through job skills training, education and work experience with an emphasis on conservation and service projects that benefit the community.</p> <p>ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS</p>

Inventory of Non-Profit Financial Empowerment Services

AGENCY	SERVICES	DESCRIPTION	SERVICE AREA	
18	Mexican American Opportunity Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial EducationFinancial CoachingFree Income Tax AssistanceCredit Repair/ BuildingPublic Benefits Screening	Provides for the socio-economic betterment of the greater Latino community of California through asset building, financial literacy, and youth education.	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS
19	National Council of La Raza	No Direct Service	As a national policy and advocacy focused organization, they work to advance policy that will foster greater access to safe and affordable financial products and services to the Latino community.	N/A
20	New Economics for Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial EducationFinancial CoachingMatched Savings/ Asset BuildingFree Income Tax AssistanceCredit Repair/ BuildingPublic Benefits Screening	Dedicated to the economic security of women, especially immigrant women, in low-wealth communities. Programs and investments focus on creating education, affordable housing, and community engagement as the primary tools needed to overcome economic insecurity.	CITY OF LOS ANGELES

Inventory of Non-Profit Financial Empowerment Services

AGENCY	SERVICES	DESCRIPTION	SERVICE AREA	
21	Salvation Army	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial Education	Objectives include: the advancement of the Christian religion, education, the relief of poverty, and other charitable objectives beneficial to society or the community of mankind as a whole.	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS
22	Small Business Development Center hosted by College of the Canyons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial EducationFinancial CoachingFree Income Tax Assistance	Provides individualized no cost consulting and low cost training to new and existing small businesses.	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS
23	The East Los Angeles Community Union (TELACU) Education Foundation, College Success Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Financial EducationFinancial CoachingFree Income Tax AssistanceCredit Repair/ BuildingPublic benefits Screening	Provides first generation, low-to-moderate-income college students with a foundation to build financial knowledge.	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS

Inventory of Non-Profit Financial Empowerment Services

AGENCY	SERVICES	DESCRIPTION	SERVICE AREA	
24	Thai Community Development Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial Education• Financial Coaching• Free Income Tax Assistance• Credit Repair/ Building• Emergency Cash Assistance• Public Benefits Screening• Cradle to College Programs	Advances the social and economic well-being of low and moderate income Thais and other ethnic communities in the greater Los Angeles area through human rights advocacy, affordable housing, healthcare, promotion of small businesses, neighborhood empowerment, and social enterprises.	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS
25	Valley Economic Development Center, Inc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial Education• Financial Coaching• Credit Repair/ Building	Creates and sustains jobs and businesses by providing high-quality small business development services.	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS
26	Volunteers of America	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial Education• Financial Coaching• Matched Savings/ Asset Building• Free Income Tax Assistance• Credit Repair/ Building	Provides programs that encourage positive development, promote self-sufficiency, and foster independence among youth.	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS

Inventory of Non-Profit Financial Empowerment Services

	AGENCY	SERVICES	DESCRIPTION	SERVICE AREA
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Cash Assistance • Public Benefits Screening • Cradle to College programs 		
27	Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) of Metro LA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Education • Financial Coaching • Matched Savings/ Asset Building • Free Income Tax Assistance • Cradle to College programs 	Focuses on strengthening the foundations of community through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility.	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS
28	Youth Policy Institute (YPI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Education • Financial Coaching • Matched Savings/ Asset Building • Free Income Tax Assistance 	Reduces poverty by ensuring families have access to high quality schools, wrap-around education and technology services, to enable a	ALL LA COUNTY RESIDENTS

Inventory of Non-Profit Financial Empowerment Services

AGENCY	SERVICES	DESCRIPTION	SERVICE AREA
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit Repair/ Building • Public Benefits Screening • Cradle to College programs 	successful transition from cradle to college and career.

APPENDIX C
Review and Analysis of External Services

**Inventory and Analysis of Financial Empowerment Services Being Provided by
External Stakeholders**

The survey referenced in this report was used to align the CFE's service offerings with those of our external partners and County departments. The survey was sent to 68 non-profits during the survey period of May 11 through May 16, 2016, and DCBA received 28 responses for a response rate of 41%. This represents a sampling of non-profits providing financial empowerment services. DCBA also surveyed the City of Los Angeles to gain more insight into their current financial empowerment offerings and the Bank on Los Angeles program. These responses were critical in the development of the CFE service offerings.

DCBA reviewed the submissions of the organizations offering financial empowerment services in the four areas of: accessibility, behavior change, performance measures, and program delivery. Financial empowerment services were found to be robust and accessible to a variety of populations throughout the County. The survey results provided insight into how the County can coordinate and align its existing services with those of its non-profit partners in order to best reach youth and EITC-eligible residents.

Inventory of Services

Financial empowerment services ranged from courses to help youth and parents save and prepare for college, to one-on-one financial coaching and free tax preparation services. Non-profits also provide credit repair assistance and online financial education courses.

Language Accessibility

Respondents reported that English and Spanish are the two most popular languages in which the services are offered, with over 75% of the providers offering their services in Spanish.

Service Delivery Areas

The survey found that many of the service offerings are targeted to those throughout Los Angeles County and not merely specific geographical communities. Sixty-five point five percent of services are offered to residents throughout the County, while 34.5% of the services are limited to specific communities. Of those who serve specific communities, it was found that most were within the City of Los Angeles.

Income Tax Assistance

The inventory revealed that many non-profits work to provide VITA and EITC outreach.

Fifty-seven percent of the organizations surveyed provide VITA services.

Integrated Service Delivery

Several of the organizations reported that they link financial literacy and counseling services with other community services and programs. This allows organizations to leverage services and provide cross referrals between programs. For example, the California Council on Economic Education creates and provides free financial literacy materials and curriculum to high school teachers so that they can teach personal finance, in addition to their core classes. Additionally, Building Skills Partnership provides financial literacy classes to low-wage immigrant workers at their work site during their lunch break, allowing workers to access financial literacy information while still remaining in the workplace.

Notable Observations

The survey revealed that the County providers offer several innovative services from foundational services such as building credit or handling a budget to targeted services on an ongoing basis to the formerly homeless or former foster youth populations. Providers have devised unique methods of service delivery.

The City of Los Angeles provided their expertise and insight into best practices for municipalities that coordinate financial empowerment services. The City integrates financial education into their summer youth jobs program through a partnership with the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC). In an effort to coordinate all of the City's financial empowerment services they have moved towards a place-based Family Source System in communities with the highest concentration of poverty. The Family Source Centers provide a myriad of services and support programs including VITA tax preparation and financial literacy coaching.

Amongst the respondents, Korean Youth & Community Center (KYCC) and California State University Northridge (CSUN) are the leading providers of VITA services.

Imagine LA provides home visits to the head of households of formerly homeless families on a monthly basis for up to two years, which ensures sustained positive outcomes.

The survey found that the Thai Community Development Center uses a popular mobile application in the Thai community to deliver aspects of their services.

Junior Achievement operates Finance Park, an innovative center where students are placed into a simulated real world scenario to learn financial empowerment concepts.

The survey also revealed that many of the services have established measurable, and time bound metrics. Seventy-nine percent of the organizations use metrics to track client progress. For example, Habitat for Humanity uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures to assess the impact of their programs by tracking job retention, improvements in credit scores, and high school and college graduation rates.

Additionally, a cohort of low-income families was established and their overall well-being including financial capability has been tracked over a 10-year period. The survey revealed several organizations that track their clients for a multi-year period, which objectively measures changes in behavior.

The survey revealed that several agencies use lending circles¹ as a tool to help their clients build credit. Although lending circles are not currently used by any County departments offering financial empowerment services, other cities such as San Francisco have used the circles to help their clients build credit when they are not able to obtain traditional lines of credit.

Many agencies have integrated college preparation into the suite of financial empowerment services that their agency offers. Some agencies promote the use of a college savings plan to help parents save for their child's college education. The El Monte Promise Foundation coordinates a collective impact effort which brings together the local school district, the chamber of commerce, the community college and California State University Los Angeles to create a seamless pipeline to college for youth in the El Monte area.

Finally, many organizations offer a range of financial empowerment services and partner with financial institutions in order to do so.

Areas of Opportunity

The inventory and assessment discovered that few, if any, services are provided to the disabled community. Only one organization indicated that they provided their services in American Sign Language, and there did not appear to be many alternate access points for the services for someone who may not be able to come to an in person counseling session.

The survey suggests that many services could be provided in additional languages. Although many services are offered in English and Spanish, only 32% of the organizations provide their services in a language other than English and Spanish.

¹ Lending circles provide a zero-interest loan to help participants build credit and access an affordable, small dollar loan. It is peer-to-peer financing. Lending circles help disadvantaged borrowers build their savings and improve their credit score. Advocates believe lending circles help low-income individuals and families who often have no credit or bad credit enter the financial mainstream.