90% OF FAMILIES IMPROVED THEIR FINANCIAL WELLBEING

CAREER AND FINANCIAL COACHING INTEGRATION

LIFT tweaked coach training so that financial capabilities and career exploration are no longer being taught separately. Understanding that financial considerations influence career choices, LIFT has developed a coach curriculum that takes into account the full-cost of pursuing education, so that coaches can better help members consider their options and potential trade-offs. More than just FAFSA, loans, and scholarships, LIFT coaches help parents understand their current financial situation and the potential financial implications that come with pursuing a degree/certification and family sustaining employment such as transportation, child-care, full versus part time, the possibility of lost-income, their current debt situation and whether the member is in a position to take on a student loan versus putting school off until in a better financial position.

The path to family sustaining employment requires sophisticated financial juggling of priorities, like how to balance costs of advanced education with keeping food on the table. LIFT’s integrated approach helps families think through tradeoffs and connect to the right services, products and networks for their individual needs. Coach training took place in June and the program team will be closely monitoring how coaches are now integrating financial planning and career advancement in their 1:1 coaching sessions.

ASSEN CONSUMER INSIGHTS REPORT

LIFT is one of the nine organizations (among other peer organizations like Earn, FII, Mission Asset Funders, Financial Clinic) that contributed to the recently released Aspen Consumer Insights Collaborative report by the Aspen Financial Security Program. The report highlights how short-term financial stability is the foundation for overall financial security and well-being and frames up a need to focus on moderating financial volatility in the lives of our communities as a precursor to getting families to take off and achieve transformational progress. Specifically, LIFT was highlighted in the report for our integrated focus on career and finances (which is unique compared to the more financial focused solutions highlighted within the report), our Goal Fund program that provides small infusions of cash to manage financial volatility, building social capital that supports parents’ goal progress, and for our focus on parents with young children. Released in April 2019, the report provided invaluable opportunities for LIFT to learn from its peers in the financial inclusion space and share its own early findings and experiences leveraging cash transfers for low-income families.

61% OF FAMILIES INCREASED THEIR EARNINGS INCOME
- Avg. monthly increase in income is $536 or $6,432 annually

57% OF FAMILIES IMPROVED THEIR NET SAVINGS AND DEBT
- Avg. increase in net savings and debt is $1,504
- Avg. increase in savings is $691
- Avg. decrease in debt is $932
In addition to parent outcomes, LIFT saw early, but promising improvements among the children of LIFT parents. Based on Appletree Institute’s Positive Behavior Rating Scale (PBRS), children in LIFT families improved their social-emotional development 50% more than their non-LIFT peers. LIFT students started off the school year below their classroom averages on their PBRS assessment but caught up by midyear. LIFT students also had higher attendance rates through midyear, 92.2 percent for highly engaged LIFT families compared to an average of 89.6 percent, which translates to an additional five days of school over the academic year. While this analysis is preliminary and based on a small sample of parents, LIFT is excited to contribute to the burgeoning two-gen research. A brief on LIFT’s two-gen findings were shared by Anne Mosle, head of the Ascend Institute at Aspen at the Aspen Ideas Festival in June 2019.

LIFT understands that to consistently improve our members’ economic security and well-being we must look at how toxic stress and social determinants of health impact our families. We are conducting a MedStar and Children’s National-led study with AppleTree and the Early Childhood Innovation Network (ECIN) to better understand how our coaching model impacts executive functioning, parental stress, and financial well-being. The study will also analyze coaching’s impact on the family unit, including child development and social-emotional behavior. Together, we are building a body of research on the efficacy of early interventions, especially as they relate to two-generation solutions to poverty.

Last year, LIFT worked alongside Dr. Adam Schickedanz, Clinical Faculty and Research Fellow at UCLA in the Department of Pediatrics, using third-party validated survey tools to conduct a randomized control trial. Members randomized to receive financial coaching and core services (the intervention group) showed less economic strain and improved mental and physical health by 6 months compared to the group receiving core services alone. The second phase of this research has LIFT replicating its model at the UCLA Harbor Health Clinic, integrating LIFT’s coaching model into and throughout not only pre-natal appointments but also the pediatric well visits for young children. LIFT is providing the technical assistance to coaches to help parents improve their physical and mental well-being and assess child-facing outcomes. LIFT seeks to assess recruitment, retention, and outcomes for families in the study against LIFT families’ outcomes to develop a clearer understanding of how location of program delivery can impact these measures.
LIFT’s recruitment strategy focused on early childhood education (ECE) providers as the avenue to source parents, and we have developed critical partnerships that permit us to meet parents where they are, establish data sharing partnerships and grow our reach to parents in the surrounding communities. As we enter the third year of our strategic plan, we are focused on diversifying our partnership pool to expand opportunities for LIFT in recruitment. In particular, we are exploring partnerships that would unlock a higher density of parents that are also aligned to career to financial goals. As such, LIFT has begun exploring partnerships with community colleges in each region to serve not only as a resource for parents but also as a recruitment source. While complex, community college partnerships provide LIFT the potential to reach large groups of parents with career goals. In 2017, community colleges served almost 6 million students, and average student body size in public 2-year colleges is about 6400, of which we can estimate approximately 26% are parents. Currently regions are working to develop partnerships with Los Angeles Trade and Technical College; City Colleges of Chicago; University of the District of Columbia; and Hostos Community College of the CUNY network.

Two years into our strategic plan we’ve seen that education is a key barrier to LIFT families gaining family sustaining employment, with only 28% of members having any sort of post-secondary education. In addition to building community college partnerships for recruitment purposes in FY20, LIFT also aims to leverage those partnerships in order to help parents access and navigate its current members into affordable postsecondary educational programs, in high growth fields. In addition to community colleges, LIFT is also exploring partnerships with job training and adult education focused organizations in order to connect members with needed certifications and credentials. For example, in DC, we are developing a partnership with ByteBack which will give members access to in demand technology and administration certifications.

\[^{1}\text{PBRS measures how often students demonstrate positive behaviors such as adapting to change, cooperating with peers, and celebrating successes, in a composite score.}\]

52% of parents persisted in or improved their education

35% of members who remained committed to our program moved above the poverty line this year
MEMBER STORY: VANESSA, LIFT-LOS ANGELES

Vanessa is a single mom of three beautiful boys. She has a bright smile, is outgoing, and is always striking up conversations with staff and other members. But behind that smile is a painful past. Vanessa came to LIFT about three years ago, after an abusive relationship that affected her emotionally and mentally to the point of a suicide attempt. Vanessa was referred to LIFT through a therapist who was familiar with our services. Vanessa expressed to her coach that she felt alone and unsupported. She was living in a neighborhood that was plagued by gangs and violence.

Often, her apartment complex and car were vandalized, and she received little support from local authorities. Vanessa was looking for a support system that would help to get back on her feet. Together with her coach, Vanessa developed goals in relation to mental health, housing, employment, and food. She was also working toward her high school diploma with the hope of becoming a nurse assistant. She continued her education because she found strength in being a good role model to her children.

Through LIFT, Vanessa found a part time job that allowed her to start and finish her nurse assistant program. She found a new relationship with a supportive partner, and became pregnant with her third son. Through her time at LIFT Vanessa gave birth, had unexpected surgery, and lost a job due to budget cuts. Despite these many obstacles, Vanessa followed through on her commitment to attend coaching sessions. In partnership with her LIFT coach, Vanessa secured a full-time job, completed CPR classes, and obtained basic needs for her newborn baby. Vanessa stated, “Every time I leave LIFT I have a big smile on my face, they make me feel special, and they have helped me so much. I am stronger because of the opportunities they found me.” Vanessa was one of the first members to start the financial coaching program. “My coach was such a good friend and taught me so much,” Vanessa shared. “Through financial coaching he encouraged me to save, so I saved for my glasses, affordable phone, and even joined Lending Circles. I was in so much debt but slowly started paying it off. I used everything I learned at LIFT.”

With her recent tax refund, Vanessa paid off her credit card debt of $5,000 dollars! She is motivated to continue improving her credit score; her aspiration is to own a home of her own. Vanessa also wants to go back to school and become a Licensed Vocational Nurse. Vanessa’s drive to create a better future for her family is an inspiration to everyone at LIFT-Los Angeles.

Last summer, Vanessa participated in our “Mothers and Finances” workshop, aimed at teaching parents how to save. At the end of the workshop, the moms shared what they had learned. Vanessa was selected by her peers as the spokesperson for her group. She was brave and vulnerable and gave her testimony. At the end of her remarks, she exclaimed with a huge smile “My self-esteem is so much higher now!” It was a powerful moment.
Surrounded by more than 500 of LIFT’s closest friends and champions LIFT was thrilled to celebrate its 20th year of service and mark not only the start of a new chapter at LIFT, but also capitalize on this incredible opportunity to garner essential resources for parents and families for years to come. In total, LIFT raised $1,330,913 to help LIFT families pursue their financial-security goals.

In honor of Kirsten’s commitment to families, LIFT launched the Family Empowerment Fund on the night of the 20th Anniversary celebration to ensure that LIFT parents have the financial resources they need to achieve their goals. Family Empowerment Funds offer small-dollar, cash infusions that parents can use to weather unexpected financial shocks (e.g. car breaking down) or to reach milestones that are key to achieving their long-term goals (e.g. buying books for school).

Fundamentally, the Family Empowerment Fund is a direct investment in LIFT families. In just one night, LIFT raised $515,612 for the Family Empowerment Fund, surpassing its goal of $500,000. Utilizing funds to improve members’ ability to achieve their goals, LIFT’s ultimate hope is to create a brighter future for the next generation and end the cycle of poverty for good.

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