

Economic Mobility Hub for American Indians in the East Metro

The Department of Indian Work (a division of Interfaith Action of Greater Saint Paul) and the Montessori American Indian Child Care Center have come together to create an Economic Mobility Hub to support economic stability and opportunity for American Indian families in the East Metro.



There is significant need for this initiative: Approximately 3,200 of the 11,000 American Indians in Ramsey County are living in poverty. Four out of 10 American Indian households in the East Metro receive SNAP, a food supplement program for poor families. Just 1 out of 10 American Indian families in the East Metro are homeowners, although research shows that homeownership is an important way to build wealth.



Our vision: The Economic Mobility Hub supports American Indian families to create a better future for themselves and their families through increased stability and economic mobility.

The Hub is receiving technical assistance from MDC, a nonprofit based in Durham, NC, that has been a key player in developing the **integrated service delivery (ISD) model** that we are modifying to meet our community's needs and unique cultural values. A key component of the ISD approach is providing culturally responsive resources and supports to families in four focus areas:

- **health, work, and income supports**
- **career training and education**
- **financial management and intergenerational wealth building**
- **community connections and cultural supports**

Research from MDC found that using an integrated services delivery approach *triples to quadruples* the odds that households will achieve **major economic outcomes such as increased education, employment, income, and financial stability.**

Our approach to working with families is family-centered and healing-informed. We interact with each other and the families we serve through a lens of our cultural values and teachings. Economic Mobility Hub staff will work together with families to access nonprofit and government services, resources, and programs. We will also provide emergency financial support and financial incentives to participate in key Hub programs and activities using our **family stabilization fund**.

Each Hub family will create a **7 Generations Family Story & Plan**. This comprehensive tracking of a family's history, current status, and plan will be stored in a shared data base system and used by families and the Hub staff to track progress, identify challenges and next steps, and document the resources and services that are used by families and well as their successes and challenges (outcomes). This shared data system will allow us to provide the best customized support to each family while also learning more about what does and does not work to promote the economic mobility of American Indian families in the East Metro.



What does success look like for families who participate in the Economic Mobility Hub?

Ultimately, we would love to see families who participate in the Economic Mobility Hub achieve increased stability in all areas of life from health to education to employment to housing to cultural, family, and community connections.

We do not have a specific definition of success for our families but rather want them to have the self-determination and access to resources they need to achieve their own goals and dreams!

Short-term outcomes (attitude, knowledge, skills)

- Increased feelings of worthiness, self-confidence
- Increased readiness to make changes
- Increased understanding of health and finances
- Increased access to and understanding of cultural teachings
- Increased awareness of resources and willingness to seek help
- Increased access to positive social supports
- Improved employment “soft skills” and readiness
- Improved parenting skills

Intermediate outcomes (behavior change)

- Increased planning and healthy behaviors
- Participating in community and cultural activities
- Seeking help when needed *Working on a career pathway
- Increased income, savings
- Improved relationships

Ultimate impact

- Families experience stability and positive outcomes in all areas of life
- Families achieve their own goals and dreams, and meet their own definition of success
- Multigenerational cycle of poverty is broken
- Society gets increased tax revenue, reduced health care costs

This information will be shared with City and County government in the interest of **improving systems** (programs and policies) to better meet the needs of families.

In spring 2023, we started a pilot test of the Economic Mobility Hub, and we will enroll up to 50 families. Many of the families have already received financial wellness training from Mni Sota Fund and have been meeting regularly to create and start working on their 7 Generations Plans. Families have also begun receiving supports and resources and referrals to begin working toward the goals in their Plans. Starting in July 2023, 25 families will be selected to participate in a **guaranteed basic income** program that will provide \$500 per month for 24 months to these families.

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The Hub’s core partners are also seeking funding to develop **Oyate Ota** (“The People’s Place,” in Dakota), an American Indian community center. Oyate Ota will provide centralized access to programs, services, and activities offered through programs and services that are rooted in American Indian cultural values and practices. Oyate Ota will support intergenerational engagement and community connectedness, and is the physical place where the Hub’s programming will be provided.



Image: Oyate Ota (“The People’s Place”)