

Social Innovation Fund Comes to Tulsa

The Social Innovation Fund, a federal program established by the Edward Kennedy Serve America Act, is a new public-private investment vehicle designed to identify and expand proven anti-poverty programs nationwide. The Mayors Fund to Advance New York City, in collaboration with the City of New York's Center for Economic Opportunity, was one of 11 organizations selected by the federal government as a lead funder for this initiative, and the Mayors Fund in turn selected eight cities to partner with, including Tulsa.

In the coming weeks, Tulsans will learn more about this initiative, which is being spearheaded by Mayor Dewey Bartlett and the Tulsa Community Foundation. The program will be competitive, and open to all qualifying non-profits. Details about the initiative and how to qualify can be found at www.nyc.gov/ceo and clicking on Information for Provider. Additional information about the Social Innovation Fund can be found at www.nationalservice.gov the website for the federal Corporation for National and Community Service.

The focus in Tulsa will be on three innovative pilots that have undergone substantial third-party evaluation. The pilots, which it is hoped will be replicated in Tulsa, include:

- Jobs-Plus, a place-based program that addresses entrenched poverty amongst public housing residents by saturating housing developments with job and career support, community building, and rent incentives. In prior pilots, residents' earnings continued to rise for three years after the program ended, greatly outpacing the income of a comparison group.
- SaveUSA, which offers a matched savings account to low-income tax filers. Although nearly half of the New York City participants reported no history of savings, 80 percent saved for at least one year to receive the match and 75 percent continue to save today.
- WorkAdvance, which creates workforce programs that employ sector-focused and skills-building strategies.

MDRC, a nationally-recognized evaluator of non-profit programs, will partner with the Mayors Fund, advising in the design of these second-generation pilots and act as the lead evaluator for all programs. By testing and evaluating programs in multiple locations, and using randomized controlled trials where appropriate, the Corporation and private funders can better determine what will succeed nationwide.

In addition to Tulsa, partners include Kansas City, Memphis, Newark, Savannah, San Antonio and Northeastern Ohio, including Cleveland, Youngstown and Akron.