



**Eastern
Nebraska
Community
Action**

MATCHED SAVINGS PROGRAM

Quarter 1 Report

February-April, 2025



Organizational Background

Eastern Nebraska Community Action Partnership's (ENCAP) mission is to **provide high-impact programs to help people get ahead**, and we have been responding to the most pressing community needs in Douglas and Sarpy Counties as a 501c3 nonprofit organization since 1965. The people we serve—most of whom are living in poverty or near poverty—are working hard to reach economic stability. In both counties, families, seniors, and veterans and active-duty military members know ENCAP as an agency ready to assist them during a crisis, to provide support services and resources to help them get back on their feet, and to walk with them as they build the skills, hope, and social capital they need to reach a brighter future.

Last year, ENCAP provided more than 40,000 services to nearly 6,500 individuals via the following program areas: Senior Longevity, Support Services, Matched Savings, Omaha Nutrition Center, Bellevue Food Pantry.

Matched Savings Pilot Program

The WHY

- 63% of the lowest income households in Douglas County, Nebraska could not cover a \$400 emergency expense (*Professional Research Consultants, 2021*).
- 71% of families face difficulty saving because of expenses they didn't plan for, and 60% say they experienced a financial shock in the past year (*Pew Charitable Trusts, 2016*).

Financial health is directly related to various forms of economic insecurity such as housing, food, etc. Financial health assesses whether people are spending, saving, borrowing, and planning in ways that will help them become more responsive to financial shocks and pursue more wealth building opportunities. The Matched Savings Program (MSP) is an investment in empowering people to get ahead over time and offers a longer-term solution to financial fragility.



MATCHED SAVINGS PROGRAM

Quarter 1 Report

Matched Savings Pilot Program

The HOW

The Matched Savings Program (MSP), is an initiative designed to improve financial wellbeing and longer term economic stability and mobility. It's an impactful opportunity to help people reflect on their relationship with money, develop a habit of savings, and get ahead over time.

- Participants agree to attend two financial coaching sessions a month with a Certified Financial Social Worker.
- The Center for Financial Social Work curriculum is utilized to support participants in creating healthier thoughts, feelings, and attitudes with their money and themselves.
- Participants also agree to attend monthly peer groups with others in the cohort. This fosters natural connections amongst those who are working towards the same goal of increased financial health and wellness.
- This 12-month program consists of two six-month phases, offering a 2:1 savings match at the end of Phase One, and a 3:1 match at the end of Phase Two. Both phases have a \$600 matching cap for participants.

Participants can ultimately turn \$1,200 into \$4,200 in one year!

Our Partners

The BRIDGE Family Resource Connector Network generously provides funding to allow ten families from partner organizations to participate in the program. Referrals for the pilot focused on those households with minor children in the home.

Cobalt Credit Union provides no fee savings accounts and additional financial education and resources for all participants. Offers hands-on assistance to set up and manage accounts.

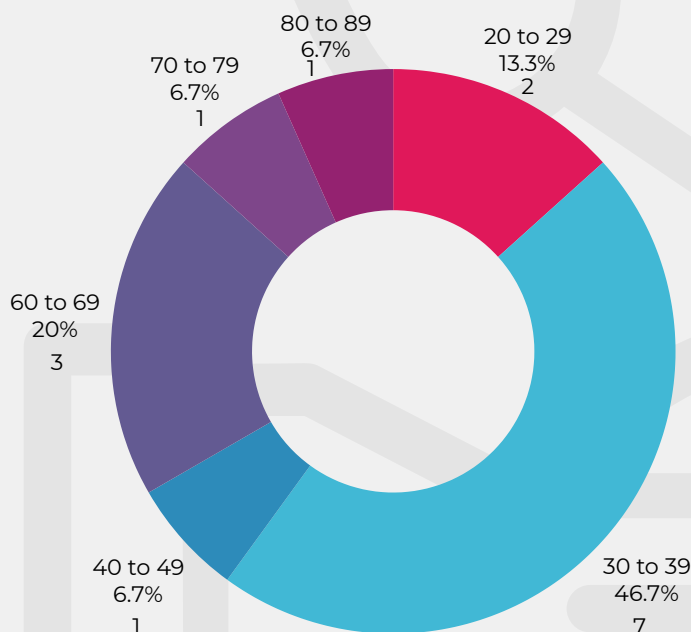


Participant Demographics

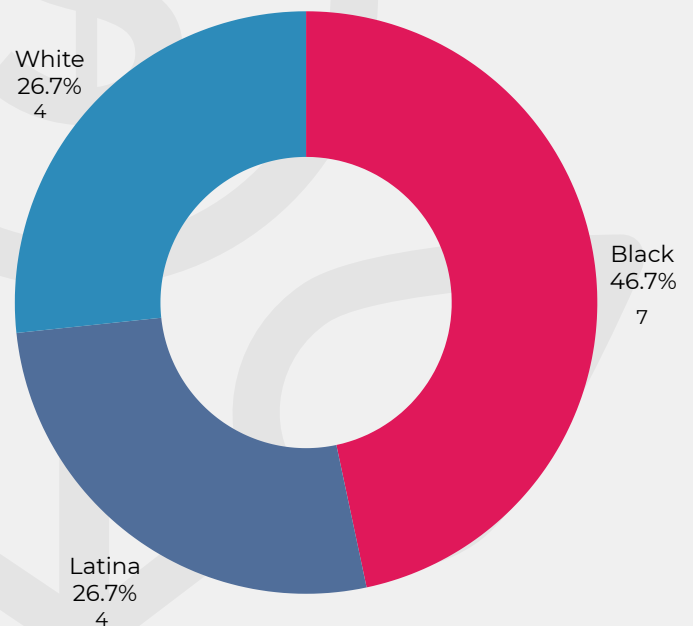
Age, Race, & Gender

The Matched Savings Program has served a total of 15 unduplicated participants/households.

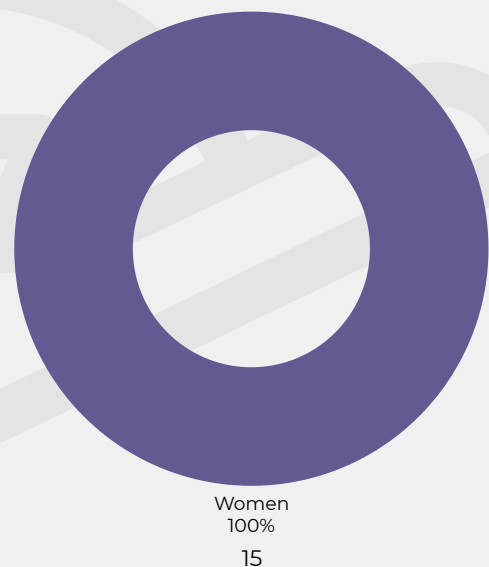
Participant Age



Participant Race



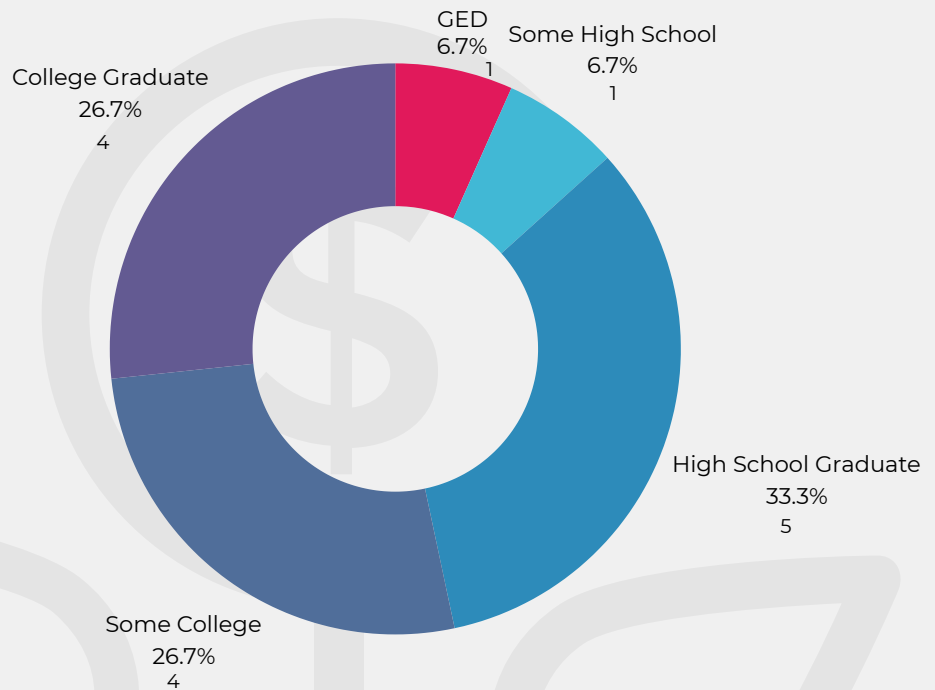
Participant Gender



Demographics

Education

Participant Education



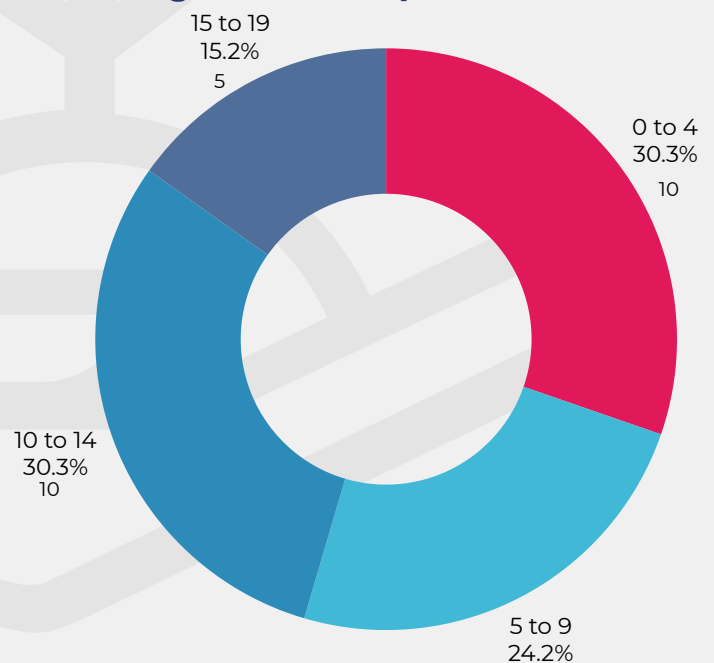
Household Ages

The Matched Savings Program positively impacts an additional 35 individuals within the 15 households.

All the additional household members, with the exception of two adult spouses, are children aged 19 and under.

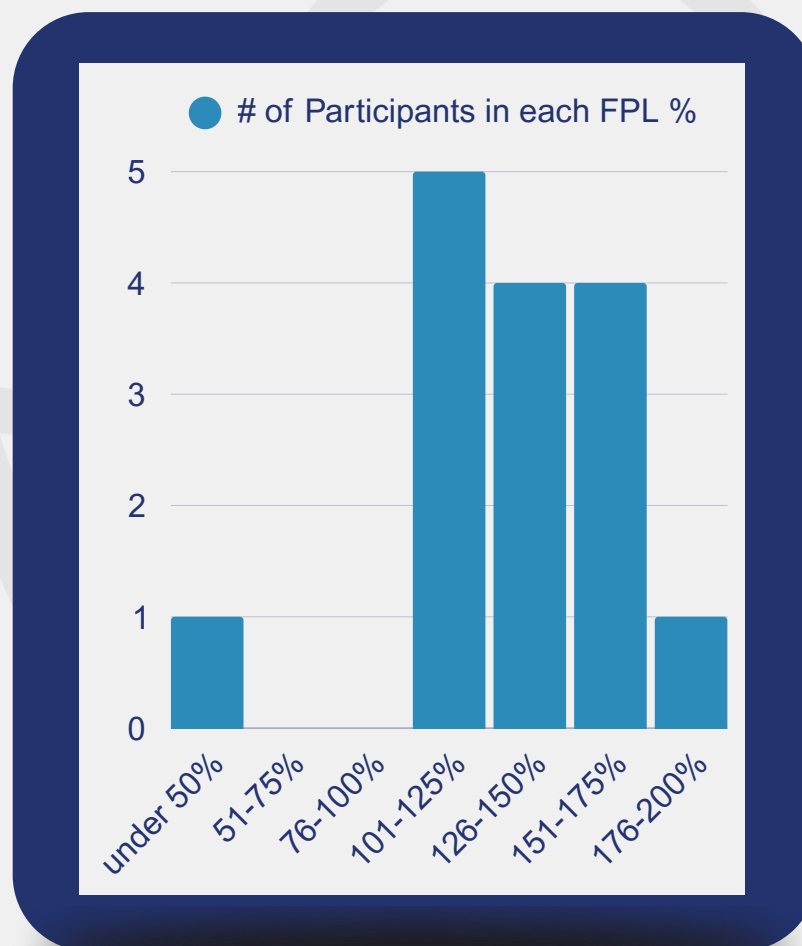
The chart to the right shows the age breakdown of the 33 children who benefit from their caregiver's participation in the program.

Age of Participants' Children



Demographics

Income Levels



MSP serves people earning at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)—\$31,300 for an individual or \$62,400 for a family of four.

This income threshold is intentional. While many public programs cap eligibility at 125–150% of the FPL, ENCAP recognizes that families slightly above those limits are often the most financially fragile. These “working poor” households are ineligible for most forms of assistance, yet still live paycheck to paycheck with little or no buffer for emergencies or future planning.

Five households, or one-third, fall in this category for the pilot.

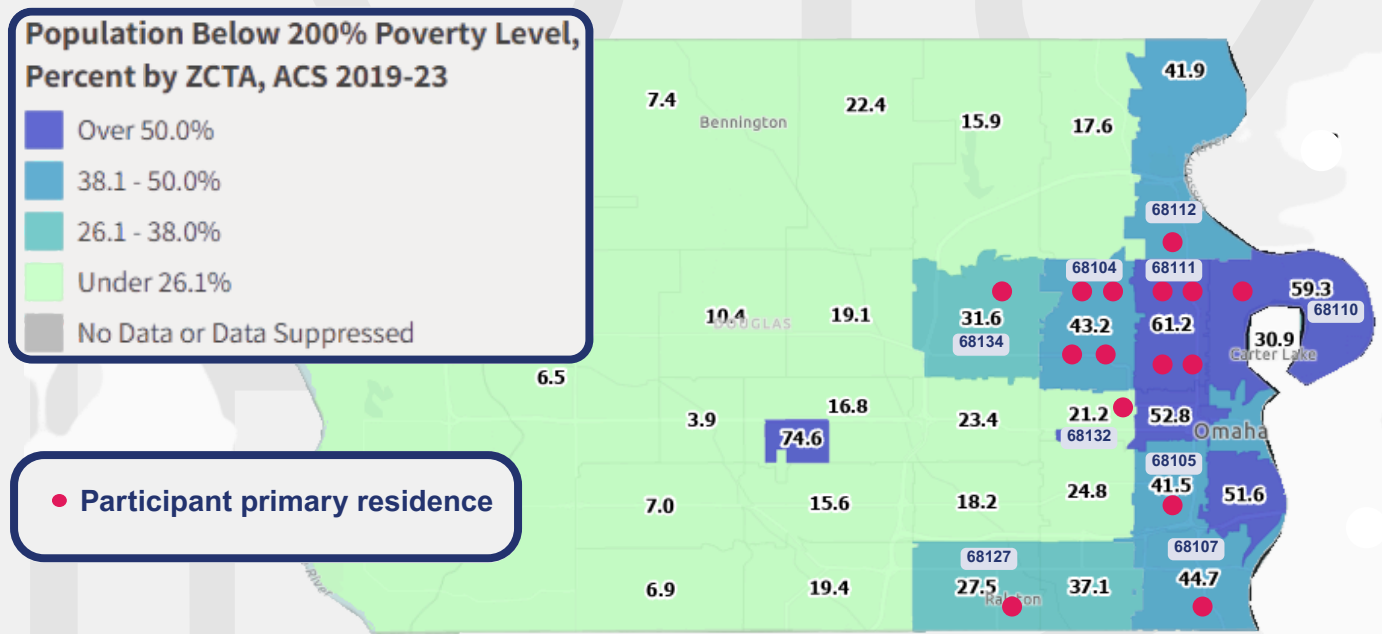
Demographics

Zip Codes and 200% Federal Poverty Level

The below map of Douglas County shows percentage of households living at 200% of the FPL by zip code.

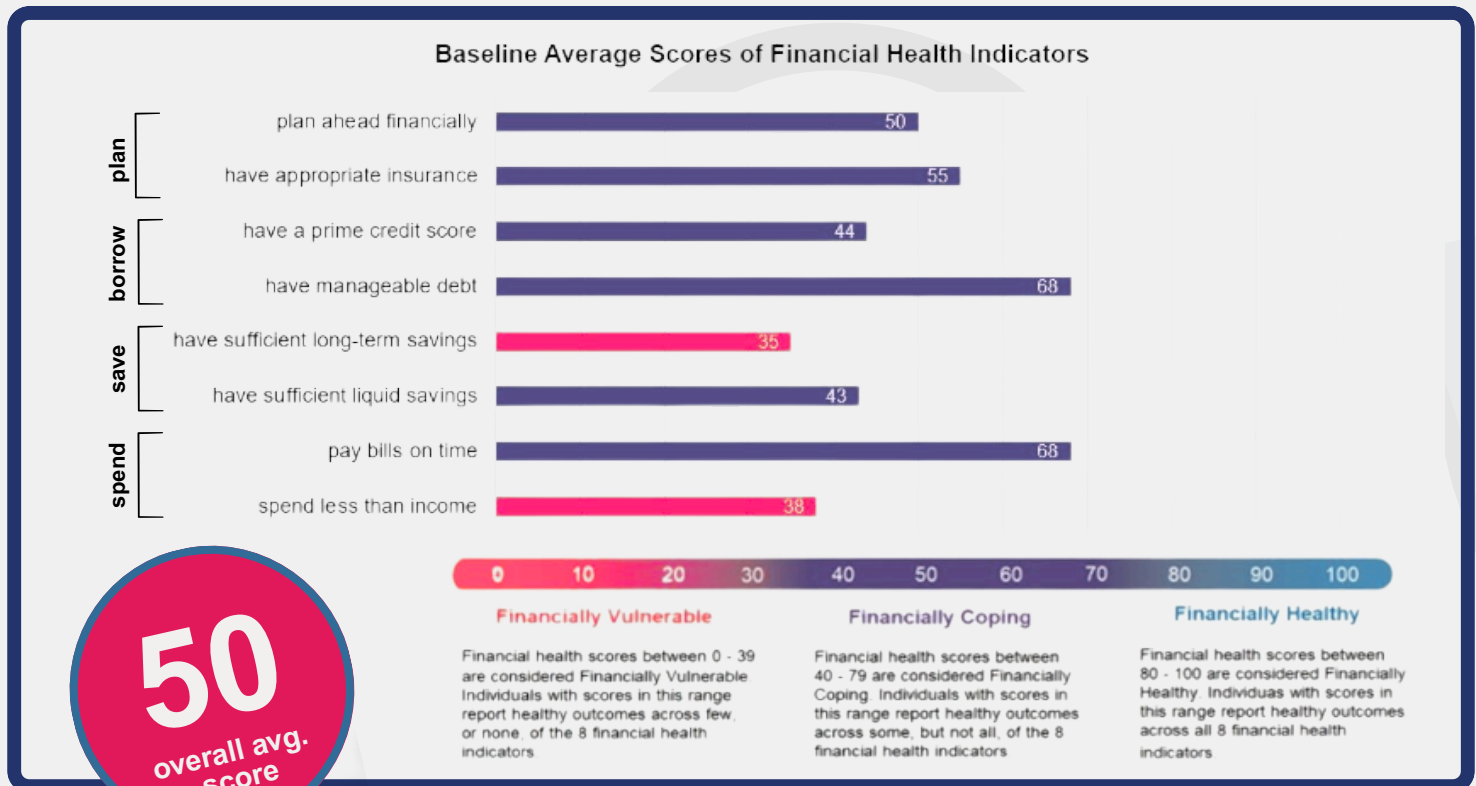
Nine zip codes are represented in the Matched Savings Program. The most represented zip codes are 68111 and 68104, with four participants each.

One participant household each resides in all other zip codes identified on the county map – 68110, 68112, 68132, 68134, 68105, 68107, 68127.



U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates, 2019-2023

Financial Health Survey



Financial Health Network

The primary outcome of increased financial health is measured by increases across eight indicators within four domains: plan, borrow, save, and spend.

The table above shows the baseline average scores of all 15 participants in the program by the eight indicators.

The average overall financial health score for program participants was 50, or financially coping.

By establishing a baseline and tracking changes over time, ENCAP can measure individual progress and evaluate the overall impact of the program on long-term financial health.

Progress data will be collected at the six month mark (July, 2025), and again at the end of the full program year (January, 2026).

Preliminary Results

Attendance

Early Results suggest that the program is already creating meaningful impact.

Participants showed strong engagement and participation in program activities. Attendance rates are shown below for twice monthly one-on-one financial coaching sessions and for monthly peer groups.

ENCAP believes this shows strong participant commitment to the Matched Savings Program.

91%

financial
coaching

83%

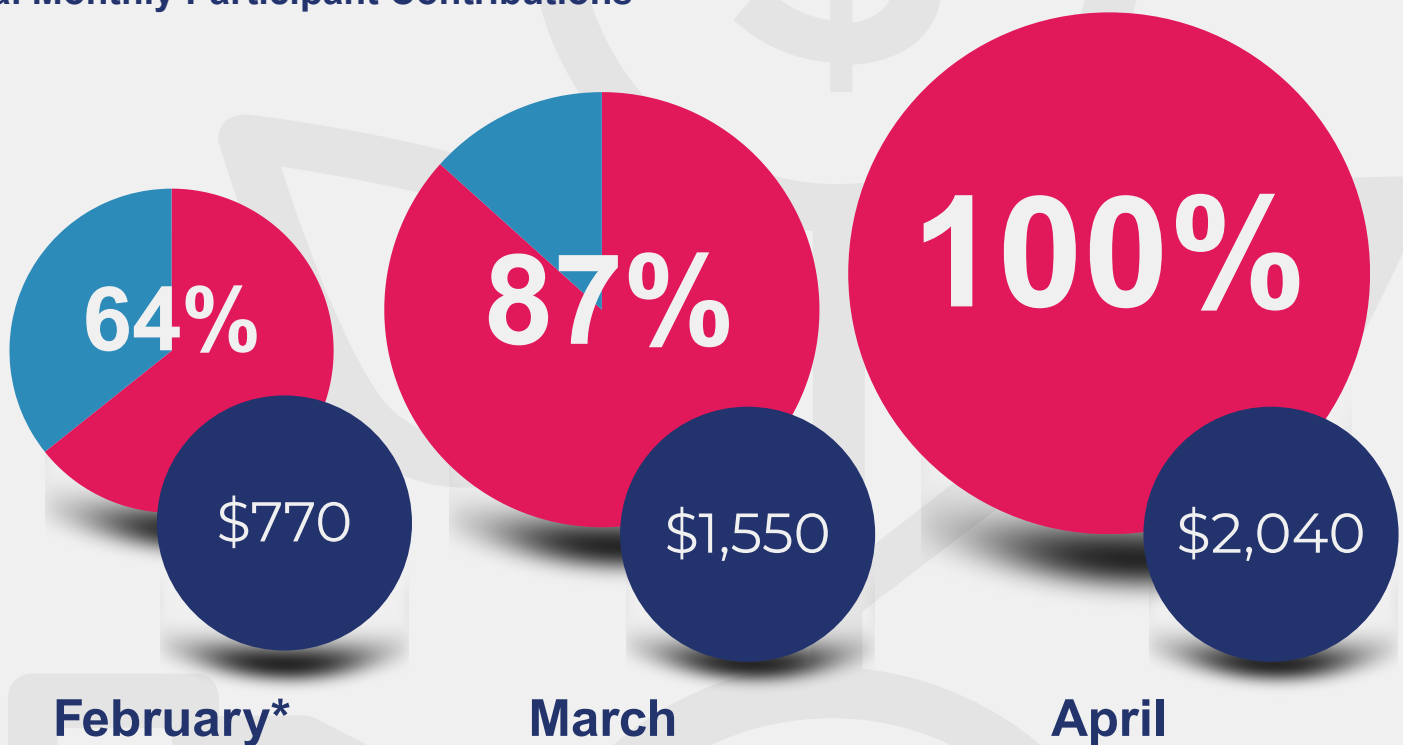
peer groups

Preliminary Results

Savings

Collectively, participants have deposited \$4,360 in savings thus far. Both the percentage of participants who have made a deposit and the financial contributions have increased each month.

Monthly Percentage of Participants Contributing to Savings
Total Monthly Participant Contributions



*Note: A primary reason for several participants not making initial deposits were due to issues setting up auto withdrawal.



\$4,360

Preliminary Results

Participant Experience

Thus far, the program has led to meaningful changes in participants' financial behaviors, awareness, and decision-making.

Some participants have paid off credit card balances after gaining a clearer understanding of how APR (annual percentage rates) and interest work.

Participants have been able to cover unexpected expenses like car repairs instead of relying on credit or borrowing from family; and several have made thoughtful decisions to delay large purchases like a new car or a vacation, when those expenses didn't align with their financial priorities.

Participant Voices

*"Unlike other programs that just focused on budgeting apps, this one really dug into **why** I spent the way I did. It wasn't just about numbers; it was about my feelings."*

"The workbook exercises were incredibly helpful. They forced me to confront my spending patterns in a way that no app or lecture ever could."

"Other programs felt like lectures, but this felt like a supportive partnership. The facilitator really understood what I was going through."

"This is the first program that actually addressed my emotional spending. The other ones just felt superficial; this one felt genuinely supportive."

"I've tried budget apps before, and they just made me feel guilty. This program helped me understand the root of my spending habits, so I could change them without shame."

"I finally feel like I'm in control of my finances, and that's a feeling I've never had before. It's not just about the money; it's about my self-respect."

Early Learnings

ENCAP has witnessed incredible impact thus far, despite the program being active for only three months.

Below are some potential improvements and changes that have been compiled during peer groups, financial coaching sessions, and focus groups.

Peer Groups

The peer groups, while currently *informed* by the participants, have the potential to be peer and participant-*led*. This allows for the participants to have more ownership over the program's offerings.

Peer groups can be less structured, allowing for more natural relationships to develop between participants.

More relationship building amongst the participants can be facilitated earlier on in the program so the peer network is strong and has the ability to be a support for everyone in the program.

Referral Process and Timeline

A February start time is not ideal as it requires recruitment to be over the winter holidays. ENCAP believes this was a primary reason for the minimal number of referrals that the program received.

There are many other referral sources that can potentially be developed within the community that aligns well with MSP.

The quick start prohibited participants from properly setting up auto withdrawals and troubleshooting with the bank. ENCAP believes setting up the accounts sooner could prevent that from happening again.