



Financial
Futures



2025
**Impact
Report**



EXPANDING ACCESS

BUILDING FUTURES



Financial
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Across the country, millions of households are working harder than ever to build financial stability. Rising costs, limited access to fair credit, and long-standing income and wealth gaps make progress feel out of reach for many families. The margin between getting by and falling behind is often dangerously thin.

When families lack opportunities to build savings, reduce debt, access education, grow businesses, or accumulate wealth, the effects ripple across generations. Small businesses struggle. Young people start adulthood at a disadvantage. Local economies lose out on stability, talent, and innovation.

Financial Futures was created to help change that trajectory.

Our work is grounded in a simple belief. When people have access to strong financial education, asset-building opportunities, and clear data to guide decisions, they can move from surviving to thriving.

We publish this report each year with the understanding that meaningful change cannot be fully captured within a single year or reduced to a set of numbers. This work unfolds over time, across systems, and within lives.

We invite you to read this report not only as a summary of the past year, but as a window into a broader body of work designed to support upward mobility for individuals and communities that have too often been overlooked and underserved.

With gratitude,
David Stiffler



THE CHALLENGE

AND OUR APPROACH

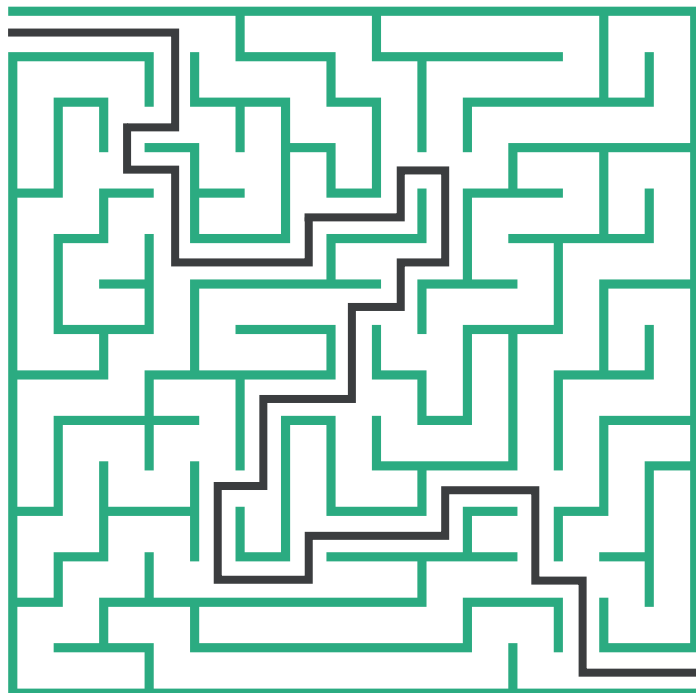


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Financial insecurity is not caused by a single barrier, but by a maze of interconnected challenges that compound over time. Limited access to affordable credit, unstable income, low savings, and a lack of assets and financial guidance work together to restrict mobility and reinforce instability.

Within this maze, progress is rarely linear. Setbacks can send people backward, turning effort into repetition and sustaining a cycle that generic financial education alone cannot break. **Direction without access does not remove walls.**

Our collaborative approach is designed to transform this maze into clear, supported pathways that address immediate needs while helping to build long-term, generational wealth and resilience. By strengthening both knowledge and access, we replace dead ends with pathways that can lead to lasting opportunity across the full landscape of financial resilience.



Financial Education with Real Assets

Pairing guidance with tangible opportunities, such as matched savings, baby bonds, investment clubs, and education savings plans.

Entrepreneurship and Small Business Growth

Expanding access to capital, technical coaching, and financial tools that help turn ideas into sustainable enterprises.

Data-Driven Insights for Better Decisions

Leveraging research relationships and advanced data platforms to identify what works, close gaps, and continuously improve outcomes.

Collaborative Relationships

Connecting community organizations, financial institutions, researchers, and innovators to scale solutions.

WHAT'S NEW

IN 2025



2025 marked a pivotal year for Financial Futures, with significant progress across asset-building, education, and community investment initiatives.

Matched Savings Program

The matched savings program was scaled tenfold in 2025, significantly expanding access to asset-building opportunities.

Main Street Initiative

The Main Street Initiative was launched to support over 20 small business owners and delivered \$900,000 in grants.

Financial Futures Internship Program

The Financial Futures Internship Program places recipients in paid internships with national organizations to strengthen career pathways and workforce readiness.

Financial Futures Education Savings Program (529 Pilot)

The Financial Futures Education Savings Program was launched to support high school juniors in Texas through seeded 529 accounts paired with financial education.

State Level Baby Bonds

Awarded a statewide contract to support a baby bonds program designed to reach thousands of Vermont residents and a privately funded program in Colorado.

A Moment of Gratitude

Each of our cohort members has contributed to advancing a body of work designed to enable upward mobility for thousands of often overlooked and underserved community members.

Together, they have helped strengthen pathways to stability, opportunity, and dignity for individuals and families across the country.

Civic Insight

EVERFI®

Financial Freedom Project

Goalsetter®

Heartland Forward

Inclusiv™

InvestSTL

Kredit Academy

MoCaFi®

MoneyByrd

New Leaf Climate Partners

National Foundation for Credit Counseling

Small Business Empowerment Center

Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis

St. Louis Community Credit Union®

Working Credit

OUR 2025 IMPACT

AT A GLANCE



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23,392

people accessed new assets



11k+

zip codes nationwide reached



\$2.3M

funding mobilized within cohort

\$7M

contributions to baby bond accounts

400 baby bond accounts opened

\$2.7M

cumulative contributions to savings

\$4.8M

cumulative contributions to debt

105

cumulative physical assets attained

\$1.6M

contributions to cash infusion programs

\$6.5M awarded to students for higher education

1,463 participants in youth financial education

9 student internships completed

\$2.9M

contributed directly to small businesses

\$3.9M

capital leveraged for small businesses

62

jobs created

33 startups launched

\$83k cumulative contributions to retirement accounts

IMPACT THROUGH PEOPLE

MATCHED SAVINGS



Through Square One's Matched Savings Program, delivered with Financial Futures cohort member St. Louis Community Credit Union, Ben Molina helps entrepreneurs build savings, access capital, and create long-term stability for their families.



Photo courtesy of St. Louis Community Credit Union

When Ben Molina moved to St. Louis, he was drawn to the city's entrepreneurial energy and its potential to help families build long-term stability. As Entrepreneurship Program Manager for Cortex's Square One program, Ben leads a people-first approach that addresses the real barriers families face in pursuing economic opportunity.

Through Square One's Matched Savings Program, delivered in partnership with St. Louis Community Credit Union, Ben helps entrepreneurs strengthen both their businesses and household finances. Participants who save \$500 receive a 5:1 match, combining financial education, mentorship, and access to capital. In the program's first year, 12 entrepreneurs saved \$6,000 and unlocked \$30,000 in capital.

IMPACT THROUGH PEOPLE

COLLEGE ACCESS AND WORKFORCE READINESS



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Imani's internship with the St. Louis Small Business Empowerment Center (SBEC) challenged her to grow both professionally and personally. The internship was made possible through a partnership forged between two Financial Futures cohort members: SBEC and the Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis. During her time at SBEC, Imani worked on a range of projects that pushed her outside her comfort zone, including contributing to management training modules, researching and writing reports for a childcare client, and helping develop a guide for Encore Entrepreneurs. These projects encouraged her to think differently about how small businesses are supported and how accessible, practical resources can create meaningful impact at various stages of the entrepreneurial journey.

One particularly formative experience involved creating a client data collection questionnaire in Google Forms—something she had never done before. Although she initially felt unsure, she worked through the challenge as she went, reinforcing the idea that confidence often comes from being willing to try, learn, and adapt.

As a small business owner herself, Imani also gained perspective on the value of thoughtful support from both sides—receiving guidance and helping build it. Working alongside mentors who genuinely cared about entrepreneurs showed her how impactful support can be when it is practical, respectful, and rooted in real understanding. The experience reinforced her interest in working in community-centered, entrepreneurship-focused spaces and strengthened her confidence in her ability to problem-solve, learn, and grow, even when she does not yet have all the answers.



Photo courtesy of the Scholarship Foundation of St. Louis

“Not knowing everything up front is okay, and confidence often comes from being willing to try, learn, and adapt.”

Imani Fluellen
Intern, St. Louis Small Business Empowerment Center

IMPACT THROUGH PEOPLE

SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Through the 2026 Main Street grant, HoneyBee Sage Wellness & Apothecary Cafe accessed retirement planning for the first time, received hands-on business coaching, and invested in marketing and brand development.



Photo courtesy of St. Louis Small Business Empowerment Center

The Main Street Initiative, powered by Edward Jones in collaboration with the St. Louis Small Business Empowerment Center (SBEC) and New Leaf Climate Partners (NLC), supports small business owners who help make communities healthy, safe, and strong. Through a six-month grant program, Main Street provides funding and technical assistance to help entrepreneurs grow and sustain their businesses, deepen community impact, and strengthen retirement savings for business owners and employees.

HoneyBee Sage Wellness & Apothecary Cafe, a 2026 Main Street grant recipient, used this investment to build long-term stability and capacity for growth. For the first time, the owner began saving for retirement with support from an Edward Jones financial advisor and received one-on-one business coaching through a volunteer coach from Associated Bank.

Grant funding also supported expanded marketing and brand development, increasing awareness of HoneyBee Sage's unique wellness-focused concept and positioning the business for its next phase of growth. As Milwaukee's first herbal beverage café combining an apothecary, tea house, and alcohol-free craft cocktail lounge, HoneyBee Sage demonstrates how Main Street investments strengthen both small businesses and the communities they serve.

IMPACT THROUGH PEOPLE

DATA ENABLEMENT



As the data enablement lead for the Financial Futures cohort, Civic Insight (formerly the Center for Civic Research and Innovation, CCRI) plays a central role in helping cohort members translate complex data into practical tools for community decision-making. Their work ensures that cohort members are not only accessing high-quality data, but also using it in ways that drive measurable economic impact.

“Heartland Forward utilizes data from a national credit bureau as the foundation for the Center for Investment Readiness. Through our partnership with Civic Insight, we have built on their experience with complex, large-scale datasets, accelerating our learning curve and path to impact. A core component of this work is an interactive, customized data dashboard that integrates multiple streams of community-centered data with analytic tools to support local decision-making. As our understanding deepens, Civic Insight continues to serve as a thought partner, grounding new community-level indicators in data science and community development best practices.

Rather than advancing this work in isolation, we benefit from a trusted partner in Civic Insight who can challenge assumptions and strengthen our ability to support communities. We value the partnership, shared learning, and the opportunity to continue enhancing the data and platform capabilities together.”

Cass Crews
Research Director, Talent Pipeline at Heartland Forward

“Partnering with Civic Insight has accelerated our ability to turn national credit bureau data into practical, community-level tools.”

Cass Crews
Research Director, Talent Pipeline at Heartland Forward



Photo courtesy of Heartland Forward

IMPACT THROUGH PEOPLE

LIFE BEYOND DEBT



“By leveraging the relationship of Edward Jones and the Financial Futures cohort, NFCC can reach the right consumers with the right help at the right time.”

Mike Croxson, CEO
National Foundation for Credit Counseling



“Our partnership with Edward Jones enabled the National Foundation for Credit Counseling (NFCC) to open all-new opportunities to help consumers become not only free from debt, but free to build a financial future. Together, we launched the WealthBuilder Program, a first-of-its-kind initiative empowering hundreds of consumers to build emergency savings while paying down debt.

The Financial Futures cohort connected us to the St. Louis Scholarship Foundation, which referred an outstanding summer intern who developed an initial concept for the Financial Health Navigator, an online tool providing users with a plan to help meet their financial goals. A volunteer employee engagement group from Edward Jones built on the intern’s learnings by conducting consumer research and delivering a recommendation for program design.

By leveraging the partnership of Edward Jones and the Financial Futures cohort, the NFCC can reach the right consumers with the right help at the right time and make Life Beyond Debt accessible to consumers nationwide.”

Mike Croxson, CEO
National Foundation for Credit Counseling

IMPACT THROUGH PEOPLE

THE FINANCIAL ADVISOR PERSPECTIVE



"Supporting the Main Street Initiative was the highlight of my 2025 professional year. I saw real, meaningful change in the lives of the employees of the small business, and gained both a client and friend in the business owner. I am thankful for the work the Financial Futures team did to set this up!"

Laci Graul
Financial Advisor
Birmingham, AL



"[The Main Street Initiative] strategically positions my office to work with business owners directly. We not only discuss financial strategies but also collaborate with each other in different areas such as marketing, business planning, exit strategies and networking opportunities. It is a win-win situation."

Miguel Lopez
Financial Advisor
St. Louis, MO



"[Baby Bonds] gives us an opportunity in a positive way to ingratiate ourselves in our communities. These are the types of programs we want to participate in...It's a good thing for us to do as a community, and for us to be on the front side from an innovative standpoint with some of these states that are looking to change the trajectory of some of these families."

Aaron Zimmerman
Regional Leader, General Partner, Financial Advisor
Colorado Springs, CO

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THE STORIES

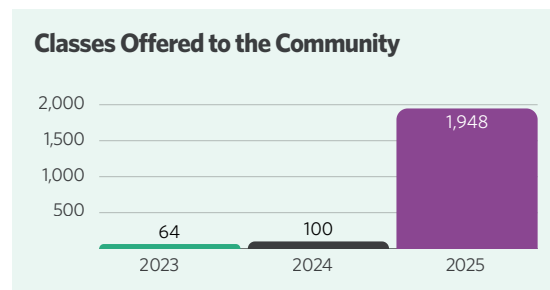
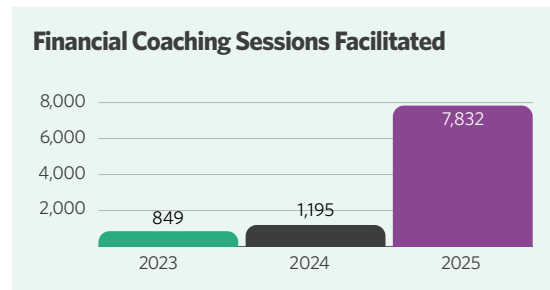
OUR IMPACT IN 2025



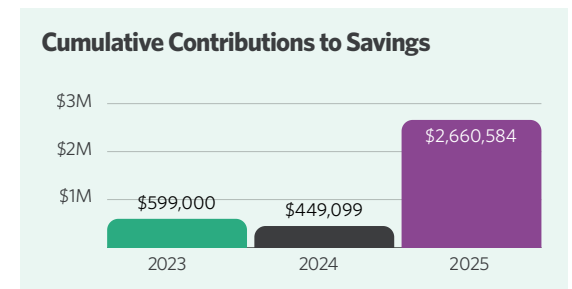
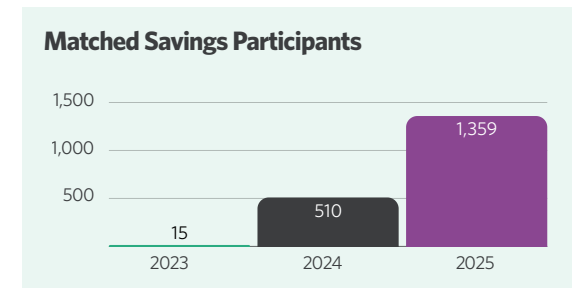
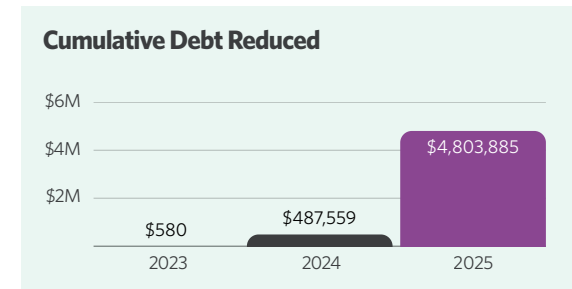
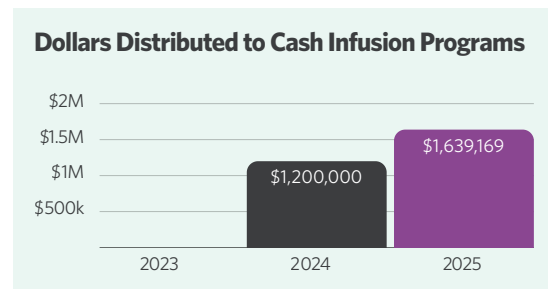
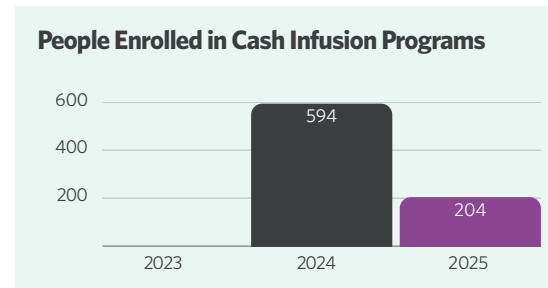
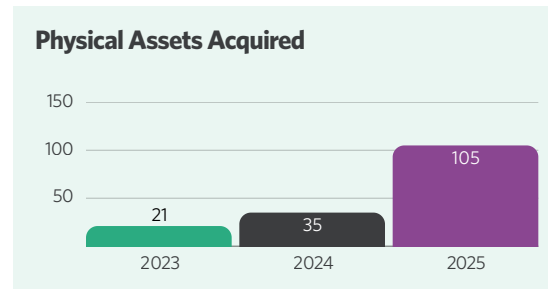
This year, Financial Futures doubled down on its impact by strengthening collaborations and expanding access to wealth-building opportunities across the St. Louis region and beyond.

Financial Resilience

Households earn enough to maintain positive cash flow, covering core expenses, emergencies, savings, and investments.



34.5 average credit score increase amongst participants



*Numbers may fluctuate slightly based on the varying number of funded organizations

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THE STORIES

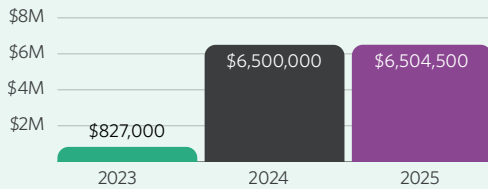
OUR IMPACT IN 2025



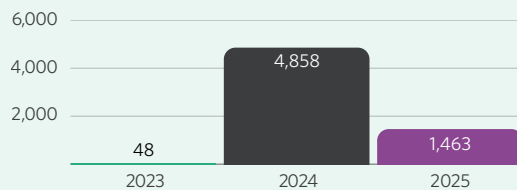
Student Access & Opportunity

Everyone can access financial education, career training, and higher education to increase wages and opportunities—debt-free.

Awarded to Students for Higher Education



Participants in Youth Financial Education



9 student internships completed

Startup Capital for Life

Every child starts adulthood with financial assets already in place, building a foundation for long-term stability and opportunity.

400 baby bond accounts opened

\$7M cumulative contributions to baby bond accounts

Retirement Security

Everyone can build retirement savings that support long-term financial security and independence.

\$83k cumulative contributions to retirement accounts

Community Investment and Growth

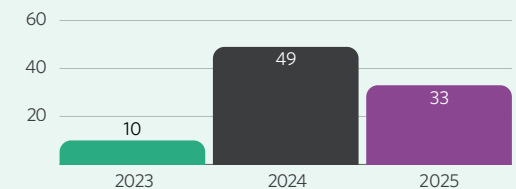
Communities can thrive when capital reaches small businesses, fueling job creation, entrepreneurship, and local economic growth.

62 jobs created

\$2.9M contributed directly to small businesses

\$3.8M capital leveraged for small businesses

Startups Launched



*Numbers may fluctuate slightly based on the varying number of funded organizations

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THE STORIES

OUR IMPACT IN 2025



Collective Capacity Building

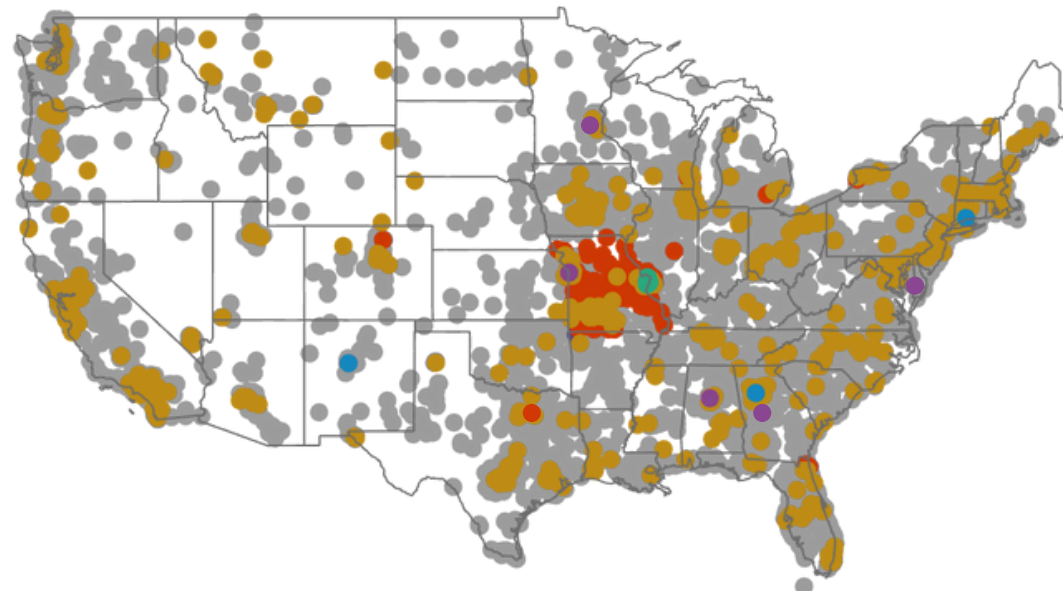
Organizations are stronger when they work together—using shared data, partnerships, and resources to expand impact and reach more people.

9 data-related pilot projects launched among cohort organizations

\$2.3M funding mobilized through collaboration

20 new intra-cohort partnerships forged

Our Impact Across the Nation



Program Focus	Number of Zip Codes Reached
Financial Education & Coaching	12,010
Matched Savings	894
Baby Bonds	4
Main Street Initiative & Small Business Support	61
Youth Education & College Access	589
Teen Investment Clubs	13
Cash Infusion	25

THE FUTURE OF FINANCIAL FUTURES

OUR ROADMAP



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What defines Financial Futures is also what drives our next chapter: deep collaboration, authentic engagement with the communities we serve, and the ambition to scale what works.

In 2026, our impact will grow through strengthened programs and new alliances—grounded in data, fueled by an asset-forward approach, and focused on real economic stability. From expanded cash programs and credit-building support for small business owners to deeper workforce insights and increased access to seeded 529 accounts, we are building pathways that last.

As a collective, we are stronger and able to ask the harder questions of ourselves – what can we achieve together to put more people on a path to stability? The weight of high costs, generational financial gaps, and access to capital continue to plague too many American lives. We are proud to lead Financial Futures into 2026 knowing we have a role to play in the lives of an increasing amount of Americans and a responsibility for a shared brighter future.

Turning Investment into Outcomes

2026 represents the fourth year of this national model and we are proud to continue the collective work towards our shared outcomes. At the highest level, through the collaborations of all of our organizations, we aspire to see communities with:

Expanded access to financial resources → Increased asset ownership, stronger credit, and greater economic resilience

Early asset-building and financial education for children → Improved long-term financial security and expanded access to education, homeownership, and wealth-building

Internships and financial knowledge → Higher educational attainment, lower debt, stronger career outcomes, and greater economic resilience

Access to retirement savings and financial guidance → Long-term financial security and retirement readiness

Stronger support for small business owners → More resilient local economies

Shared, high-quality, community-informed data → More equitable investment, better alignment of resources, and sustained cross-sector collaboration

