

# BUILDING ASSETS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Vol.1 Issue 1

## First Issue

Welcome to the first issue of SEDI's newsletter for asset-building initiatives and policy development.

Over the last few years, many of you will have received "IDA Updates" from SEDI to keep you abreast of our activities in developing and gaining support for a proposal for the first national-scale demonstration of Individual Development Accounts in Canada. As that demonstration gets closer to implementation and as SEDI - with other organizations - takes on new activities in asset-based policy development and advocacy, we hope you'll find this newsletter interesting and informative.

In the future, we'll also be inviting contributions from our network of organizations and individuals who share our enthusiasm for asset-based approaches to alleviate poverty and enhance self-sufficiency for disadvantaged families and individuals. If you or your organisation is interested in being added to the distribution list for this publication, or if you'd like to contribute an article, please contact SEDI at:

Phone: 416-665-2828, x235

Fax: 416-665-1661 Attention: Jennifer

E-mail: [info@sedi.org](mailto:info@sedi.org)

This publication is also available on the Internet at: [www.sedi.org](http://www.sedi.org)

### What's In This Issue ....

- \* Project Updates
- \* Highlights from local IDA Projects
- \* SEDI's name change
- \* Important dates

## Canadian IDA Demonstration

As you know, last summer the proposal for a national demonstration of Individual Development Accounts received Ministerial approval and funding from Human Resources Development Canada. Since that time, the project has been moving ahead in its first and developmental year before we bring it into the field this summer. The project has been officially named: **learn\$ave / \$avoir en banque** - so look forward to seeing more of this moniker.

### A quick background...

Since the proposal was submitted, some elements of the project may have evolved a little. For example, this current project is really aimed at enhancing access to adult learning for low-income Canadians. However the core objective - testing an asset-based approach to building self-sufficiency and enhancing economic security and well being for low-income Canadians - remains the same. Here's a quick refresher on the project:

SEDI has partnered with the Social Research and

**learn\$ave**   
A national demonstration project of  
Individual Development Accounts for Learning

**\$avoir en banque**   
Un projet national de démonstration de Comptes  
individuels de développement axés sur l'apprentissage

Demonstration Corporation (SRDC), experts in the field of social research and evaluation, to design and implement the project - an 8-year demonstration of Individual Development Accounts for learning. The largest demonstration of its kind in the world, **learn\$ave** will reach 4,650 low-income Canadians who volunteer to take part in:



Across Toronto, Halifax and Vancouver, 2,400 account holders' savings will be matched through the project funding with \$3 for every dollar saved up to \$1,500. Of these, 1,200 account holders will also receive financial management training and case management services. Another 1,200 persons will be tracked in a comparison group. Across the remaining 7 case study sites, 1,050 account holders will take part in the project, receiving varying levels of matching on their personal savings, as well as services. Account holders will be able to use their savings for a learning opportunity through adult education, training or micro-enterprise capitalisation. Participants will be recruited over the first 2 years of delivery and account holders will have up to 3 years to save and an additional year to "cash-out" their accounts for adult learning opportunities.

By evaluating the outcomes in each site, **learn\$ave** hopes to show that IDAs for learning can make a difference in the lives of low-income Canadians, helping people to help themselves quit a cycle of poverty through saving and learning. Information and lessons learned during **learn\$ave's** 8 years will provide governments and other interested Canadians with solid information on the efficacy of IDAs in offering long-term benefits for low-income Canadians and improving Canada's system of social programs.



## Making progress...

In the last 8 months, the project partners have been planning, designing and preparing. Given the complexity of the project, this developmental year is really critical to its success. The enthusiasm and good will of all organizations involved continues to be tremendous and is keeping us all on track. Here's a quick run-down of some of the key milestones achieved so far:

- We've formed a consortium agreement with SRDC. Together, SEDI and SRDC will guide the project, providing leadership in their respective areas of expertise. SEDI retains responsibility for the operational design and implementation of the project, while SRDC is responsible for the design and implementation of a rigorous research and evaluation framework to track and analyse results from the project.
- SEDI and SRDC have also built relationships with non-profit community agencies, in each of the ten locations, with experience and expertise in providing services to low-income Canadians. These community partners will act as the delivery agents for the project in each location, recruiting participants, providing services and gathering information for research. Community partners have been actively participating in the design of the project during this developmental year.
- We're developing an agreement with the Royal Bank to provide competitive deposit-account services to **learn\$ave** participants in 9 locations. Community partners in Montreal and Winnipeg have reached separate agreements with local financial institutions.

- We've contracted with the PLA Centre in Halifax, leaders in adult education, to design a new curriculum for financial management training for project participants. The new curriculum will combine the strengths of existing materials on financial management and the principles of the prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) approach to adult learning.
- Last Fall, SEDI hosted the first meeting of project partners, bringing together representatives from each of the partnering community agencies with representatives from HRDC, SRDC, the Royal Bank and the PLA Centre. This 2 day mini-conference in Toronto was an opportunity to discuss a range of issues related to the project - from policy questions, to implementation and research frameworks - and to hear from Jennifer Robey, a practitioner in the largest IDA-site in the United States. Copies of the report from the meeting are available on SEDI's website.
- Recently, the design report, the first key deliverable for the project, was submitted to the project funder - HRDC. Written by SRDC with in-put from SEDI, the report lays out the framework for the implementation of the project, providing detail on its research and evaluation strategy and operational design. The preparation of the report was a lengthy and intensive process and a significant milestone for the project. Congratulations to all those involved in writing the report.



## Looking ahead ...

There's still a significant amount of work to be done in the next few months before community partners start recruiting participants and the first **learn\$ave** accounts are opened. Here's a quick look ahead:

- We'll be finalising arrangements with partnering community agencies, and participating financial institutions.
- SEDI will be writing an operations manual for the project to assist community partners with delivery of **learn\$ave** services.

- We'll be finalising and testing a new Management Information System, customised to **learn\$ave**. The system will provide electronic data for research, for client management and for program monitoring.
- We'll be launching the project in the late spring and opening the recruiting in the 7 case study sites. Recruiting in Toronto, Halifax and Vancouver is expected to start shortly thereafter.

Keep checking SEDI's website for more information and updates.  
Or check out SRDC's website at: [www.srdc.org](http://www.srdc.org)



## Save the Date



### March 7-9, 2001

2001 IDA National Learning Conference, *Community to Capital: Small Investments, Big Returns*, Washington D.C.

Sponsored by the Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED) in Washington, D.C. and the Centre for Social Development (CSD) in St. Louis, Missouri. For more information, contact CFED at (202) 408-9788, CSD at (314) 935-7433 or visit CFED's website at [www.cfed.org](http://www.cfed.org)

In place of an U.S. National Learning Conference in 2002, SEDI and CFED have also agreed to co-sponsor the first ever international IDA conference in March 2002. The conference will bring together practitioners, policy makers and analysts, academics and media from Canada, the U.S., the United Kingdom and other countries. Stay tuned for more details later this spring.



## Conference in London

### SEDI takes part in asset-based policy conference in London

Earlier this year SEDI was invited to participate in an international conference - *Asset-Based Welfare: An International Debate* - co-sponsored by the Centre for Social Development and the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) in Britain. The one-day conference brought together representatives from the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Sweden, Australia and Taipei.

SEDI's Executive Director, Peter Nares, gave a presentation on the Canadian experience and **learn\$ave**. His remarks focused on the development of **learn\$ave** and the value of community-based approaches to delivering asset-based programming. Based on that presentation, SEDI has now been invited to submit a policy paper to IPPR for publication later this year. Copies of this paper will be available on SEDI's website or through the IPPR.



# Highlights from Local IDA Projects in Canada

While **learn\$ave** will be the first national IDA project in Canada, groups in Kitchener-Waterloo, Winnipeg and Calgary have already delivered IDA programs to low-income Canadians in their communities. **learn\$ave** partners are excited that each of these experienced agencies has agreed to act as a community partner in the national demonstration project.

## Kitchener-Waterloo

Lutherwood Community Opportunities Development Association, a multi-service community organisation in the Kitchener-Waterloo region, has delivered 2 IDA-style programs. Opportunity Development Accounts (ODAs) have been delivered to the Chandler-Mowat Community and to 14 sole-support mothers. Among the sole-support mothers, 8 successfully attended financial management training sessions and saved \$250 over one year, matched at a 3:1 ratio from project funders, generating \$8,000 in savings for education, small business start-up or the purchase of a computer.

For more information, contact De Rail at:  
(519) 743-2460 ext. 411 or by e-mail at  
[learnsave@lwdcoda.org](mailto:learnsave@lwdcoda.org)

## Calgary

MCC Alberta Employment Development offered Fair Gains to 20 low-income Calgarians in 1999, 20 in 2000, and an expected 40 in 2001. By the end of the first year, more than 90% of participants were saving more than \$40 per month matched at a 3:1 ratio from program funds. Participants saved towards education, small business and housing. Five out of the 20 participants in 1999 continued their savings beyond the first year towards a down payment on a home, saving as much as \$90 per month at a 4:1 match ratio.

For more information, contact:  
Rodd Myers or Khadijah Shivji at MCC Employment Development (403) 272-9323  
Or visit their Website at: [www.mcca-ed.org](http://www.mcca-ed.org)

## Winnipeg

In February 2000, SEED Winnipeg Inc., in partnership with the Northend Community Ministry (NECM), introduced a local IDA program that aims to reach 30 participants this year. In delivering the IDA program, SEED and NECM are working with a collaborative of local organizations. Participants have completed their financial management training and have now been saving for 3 months.

For more information, contact Louise Simbandumwe at SEED Winnipeg Inc, (204) 927-9933  
Or Andrew Douglas at NECM, (204) 586-8137

## A New Name



Published by  
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Over the last few years SEDI has grown and added some new directions. Based on our successful history as an innovator and advocator of self-employment development for low-income families and individuals, we've applied our core expertise to new areas including:

- Asset-based policy
- Youth entrepreneurship and development
- Organisational capacity building and networking

And we're exploring new avenues for partnership with members of the disabled community as well as new opportunities for asset-based initiatives.

To reflect our growing range of activities, Self Employment Development Initiatives will be changing its name to **Social and Enterprise Development Innovations**. Our mission - to contribute to enterprise development and increase access to self employment for disadvantaged people who are pursuing economic independence and increased social participation - is still the same but we've grown the ways in which we fulfil it.