



Understanding the Office of Refugee Resettlement's Individual Development Account Program

ORR Program Highlight

Asset building and self-sufficiency are important goals for newly resettled refugees in the United States. Individual Development Accounts can play a vital role in developing financial literacy and independence through matching funds and building assets.

Individual Development Accounts

Refugees seek opportunities to build assets in hopes of securing inter-generational wealth in the United States. But saving money can be a challenging endeavor when refugees are working to establish their lives in a new country. Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) offer an opportunity for refugees to save toward an asset with the assistance of matching funds and learn financial capability skills through financial education and asset-specific training.



Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) are matched savings accounts designed to help refugees save for a specific purchase.

Eligibility Requirements for Refugees:

Time: The program serves refugees who have been in the United States for less than five years.

Employment: Refugees are required to have a paying job.

Income Levels: Refugees must earn less than 300% of the federal poverty level (or less than 80% of HAMFI for home purchase).

Assets: Refugees must have less than \$10,000.00 US Dollars' worth of assets (excluding one car and one home).

Benefits of IDAs

Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) can help refugees save for one of four assets:

- **Car**
- **Home purchase**
- **Business capitalization**
- **Post-secondary education or training**
- **Housing relief (*Note: Only ASA-funded IDA programs allow for this asset category*)**

Matched savings is a key component of this program. For every one dollar saved by a client in an IDA, the program matches one dollar. The \$1:\$1 matches are currently eligible up to \$2,000 for individuals and \$4,000 for households. Fund matching is subject to change each fiscal year, and it is important to check with your IDA program to ensure numbers are accurate.

IDA programs provide asset-specific training to help improve refugees' long-term outcomes and success. This training is tailored toward their savings goal (i.e., car, home purchase, business start-up, or education).

In addition, refugees receive well-rounded financial capability training as part of the IDA program. Training includes topics such as the American financial system, budgeting, saving, and credit.

Successful Outcomes

The wraparound approach for savings, asset-specific training, and financial literacy helps increase successful outcomes for refugees in many ways, including the following:

- **Creates permanent long-term housing solutions:** This creates a line of inter-

generational wealth for dependents and increases rates of homeownership.

- **Assists with education and training:** Increases access to continued education and training while helping improve future outcomes including job placement and career advancement.
- **Provides access to funding:** Funding increases refugees' ability to make large purchases and invest in their future.
- **Builds self-resiliency:** This improves refugees' ability to save, increases assets and long-term investments, and builds generational wealth.
- **Promotes partnerships with banks and credit unions:** Program participants create bank accounts to participate in fund matching. In turn, they have a safe place to keep money and earn interest.
- **Increases stability:** A car can support job placement and job upgrade opportunities, as well as ensure that refugees have physical access to resources and support services that could further stabilize their family system.
- **Increases wealth:** A business can provide refugees with additional income, flexible employment, and tax benefits needed to build family wealth.

IDA Program Spotlight

International Institute of New England (IINE) IDA Program

IINE New Hampshire's IDA grant runs from 2021 to 2025 and currently works with **20 individuals and 45 families** saving for economic stability. The program works with participants from New Hampshire and offers enrollment to clients from other resettlement agencies and refugee resource centers throughout the state.

IINE New Hampshire partners with local agencies—including NeighborWorks of Southern New Hampshire, Bangor Savings Bank, NAACP Manchester, and Victory Women of Vision—to provide culturally aware financial education. The current projects in financial education include organizing the homebuyer training and producing a series of financial education videos to allow for a flexible learning schedule for clients to engage with online content.

The achievements of program participants so far include the following:

- **13 participants actively saving to support a downpayment on a home.** Home purchases, reinforced by homebuyer training seminars, will help improve the stability of refugees.
- **72 participants actively saving to purchase a vehicle.** This large number is indicative of the essential need for reliable transportation to maintain and improve employment for refugees with work schedules that often do not align with those of public transportation.
- **21 participants have successfully purchased a vehicle.** Vehicle purchases have helped improve economic self-sufficiency in careers in social services, manufacturing, and the trades, as well as opening pathways to higher education for some of the younger participants.

To learn more about IINE New Hampshire and their work, check out their [webpage](#) on the IINE site.

How to Locate Services or Become a Grantee

To find an Individual Development Account program near you, review this list of [ORR Individual Development Accounts grantees](#).

Organizations that wish to operate an IDA program must submit an application. To apply to become a grantee, please see [GRANTS.GOV](#).

Conclusion

Individual Development Account programs are an excellent tool to help refugees meet their goals and invest in their futures. The \$1:\$1 matching funds, asset-specific training, and well-rounded financial capability training support refugees in achieving successful outcomes and building self-sufficiency.

Resources

[ORR Individual Development Accounts | The Administration for Children and Families \(hhs.gov\)](#) These operational guidelines provide a good overview of IDA programs and how to become a grantee.

[About ORR Individual Development Accounts | The Administration for Children and Families \(hhs.gov\)](#) This guide explains the key features and outcomes of IDAs.

[Individual Development Account \(Manchester\) - International Institute of New England \(iine.org\)](#) This website includes information on the Individual Development Account program for the International Institute of New England.

To learn more about
Switchboard, visit
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