

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CONTEXT

Michigan Benefits Access (MBA) is an unprecedented public/private partnership that aims to connect greater numbers of families in Michigan to a range of benefits to help promote household economic stability. The genesis of MBA came out of the aftermath of the devastating economic recession of 2008, which left Michigan as one of the hardest hit states in the nation. MBA uses a two-pronged strategy. First, engage networks of community partners and other key institutions to “get the word out” to families who may be eligible for benefits but may need assistance accessing these benefits. Second, launch an easy-to-navigate one-stop web portal, MI Bridges, for individuals to either enroll themselves or to receive support enrolling from community partners.

OPPORTUNITY

Michigan Benefits Access is positioned to continue the work of helping Michiganders access benefits and move further towards the goal of economic self-sufficiency. Possible areas of development of MBA could include:

- Further integration of services within newly formed MDHHS to foster a people centric model of service.
- Added development of the network of MI Bridges community partners and trained MI Bridges Navigators to serve on the “front lines” in providing integrated people centric services.
- Integration of the WIC application within the MI Bridges platform to assure added benefits to families accessing this benefit.
- Alignment with financial coaching training to provide an added benefit to clients in increasing long term economic self-sufficiency through financial management and becoming or further accessing banking services.
- Integration with Workforce Development to provide added support to Michigan’s working families.
- Further MI Bridges training to incorporate full integration of benefits provision within community partners, thus further serving the needs of the whole person/family.

RESULTS

Michigan Benefits Access, through the implementation and use of a two pronged approach has made tremendous impact upon the State of Michigan. As of March 2015:

Training:

- 424 MBA/MI Bridges Trainings offered to the community.
- 2,174 Organizations Represented.
- 6,345 people trained to navigate the MI Bridges portal.

MBA Website

- 41,020 new visits to the MBA website.
- 1,550 people linked to MDHHS YouTube videos on how to use MI Bridges
- 22,372 people linked from www.mibenefitsaccess.org to MI Bridges

Mini-Grants

- \$458,922.15 awarded to 72 organizations to provide benefits access services to clients.
- 10,650 applications submitted by mini-grant recipients.



RESULTS (continued)

AmeriCorps

- 2,194 people assisted with MI Bridges.
- 87,027 people assisted via Michigan 2-1-1
- 3,005 organizations contacted and educated regarding MBA/MI Bridges
- 355 Navigation Partners Gained
- 1,980 volunteers trained as Community Resource Navigators.

MBA Partners

- 479 Community Based Organizations have agreed to become Navigation Partners
- 112 Community Based Organizations have agreed to become Access Partners
- 127 Health Organizations have agreed to become Navigation Partners.
- 70% of applications are now being submitted via MI Bridges.
- 42,460 MI Bridges applications came through Navigation Partners
- \$36,014,201.46 --Total cash value (minus health applications) of Navigation Partner Assisted Applications

MBA FUNDERS

The concept of Michigan Benefits Access ignited interest from a variety of national and Michigan-based foundations that have generously contributed to research, build-out of technology, and development of outreach statewide. MBA funders include: Consumers Energy Foundation, DTE Energy Foundation, The Max M & Marjorie Fisher Foundation, Ford Foundation, Kresge Foundation, The McGregor Fund, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Open Society Foundations and the Michigan Community Service Commission.

MI BRIDGES

Developed and maintained by the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services, MI Bridges provides families and individuals with safe and secure access to the following benefit applications: cash assistance, child development and care, state emergency relief – energy and non-energy, food assistance and medical assistance (including the newly added Healthy Michigan application). Additionally, it is easy to:

- Report changes on the benefit programs listed above
- Upload documents for verifications, redeterminations, and new applications
- Complete benefits applications in multiple languages.
- Receive emails and/or text messages when new correspondence is generated

STATEWIDE OUTREACH EFFORTS

The following are some outreach activities currently underway:

- Michigan Association of United Ways (MAUW) offers MBA and MI Bridges Navigation trainings statewide for community based organizations to build their capacity to assist families in applying for benefits.
- MDHHS Community Resource Coordinators and local United Ways contact community organizations to inform them about MBA and MI Bridges.
- MAUW hosts regional meetings for Navigation partners, Mini-Grant Recipients, United Ways and Community Resource Coordinators to support partners and increase their effectiveness in providing benefits access services.
- MAUW maintains the MBA website, www.mibenefitsaccess.org. The MBA website houses outreach and training materials, best practices, and information on training accessibility.

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