

Workplace Savings Evaluation Report

Evaluation Outcomes from the Automatic Savings Program at Open Door Preschools

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Introduction

This report presents a comprehensive analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from an evaluation of the Automatic Savings Program implemented at three Open Door Preschool locations in Austin, Texas, during the spring of 2015. The Automatic Savings Program was evaluated using a randomized control trial (RCT) designed to test the impact of different messaging tactics on employees' enrollment in an automatic savings opportunity offered through their workplace. The program allowed employees to automatically deposit a portion of each paycheck into their savings account at the bank. For employees who did not have a bank account, the program helped facilitate account opening.

The Automatic Savings Program was collaboratively developed by a variety of partners as part of the Savings and Innovation Learning Cluster (SILC), a nationwide project launched by the Corporation for Enterprise Development (CFED) to cultivate and test innovative strategies for facilitating savings by low- and moderate-income (LMI) individuals and families. The Child and Family Research Partnership (CFRP) was contracted to evaluate the Texas portion of the SILC project by the Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP). United Way for Greater Austin was the program implementer for the project.

Program Design and Timeline

The Automatic Savings Program was introduced by email to a total of 66 Open Door employees across three different locations on February 10, 2015. In the email, employees were briefly introduced to the program and asked to attend a lunch meeting the following week to learn more. On February 16, an email was sent to all employees reminding them about the upcoming lunch meeting. Meetings were held on February 17-19, one per day at each of the three locations. At the meeting, employees received free lunch, and the program was explained by Open Door's Executive Director. A packet of materials including a program flyer and enrollment form was also provided. During the course of the meeting, employees were given time to ask questions and enroll in the Automatic Savings Program on the spot. In addition, a representative from a local banking partner was available to open bank accounts for employees who wanted to participate but did not have a bank.

One week after the lunch meeting, employees received a follow-up email reminding them that the opportunity to enroll in automatic savings was still available. Program partners continued to monitor enrollment through this period. Finally, a match was introduced on March 30, 2015, to encourage additional enrollment among employees who had not yet signed up. The match was introduced by email, and offered a \$50 match to all employees who had saved at least \$50 through the Automatic Savings Program by October 31, 2015. Employees were reminded about the match one week later by email, on April 8. On April 9, the SILC evaluation period officially ended; however, employees retained the ability to sign up for the program, and collection of enrollment data continued up until June 1, 2015, the end of the contract period with Open Door Preschools. This report includes data collected through June 1, 2015.

EVALUATION STRATEGY

Program partners were interested in whether employees responded to different messaging techniques by enrolling in the program at differential rates. Specifically, program partners wanted to know whether employees who received a message that included a projected savings amount and “regret prime” were more likely to enroll. To test this question, employees were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups across all three locations.

To determine group assignment, employees were first stratified by hourly pay and location. Employees in each stratum were then randomly assigned to the treatment (n=32) or control group (n=34). The treatment and control groups were tested for balance across several indicators, including the number that had a bank account, a checking account, and a savings account; the number currently saving; and the ratio of full- to part-time employees. The treatment and control groups were sufficiently balanced across these indicators.

Throughout most of the evaluation period, employees in the treatment and control groups received identical emails; at two time points, however, emails received by individuals in the treatment group included additional language intended to further incentivize enrollment. The treatment language, which included a projected savings amount and regret prime, was as follows:

Saving \$10 per paycheck through this program would add up to \$240 by the end of one year—enough to help cover an unexpected expense, or take the first step towards a larger financial goal. Don’t miss out on this great opportunity to save towards your personal financial goals.

This message was sent to treatment group employees in the introductory email, as well as in the reminder email following the meeting; together, these two email messages served as a treatment package, and are marked in red in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Timeline of Program Messaging with Intervention Points in Red



EVALUATION COMPONENTS

The primary outcomes of interest in this evaluation were enrollment rates, savings amounts, timing of enrollment, and attrition rates (i.e., program exit by choice or as a result of leaving the position). These outcomes were derived from administrative data provided by the Executive Director at Open Door.

In addition, program partners sought to understand more about who enrolled in the Automatic Savings Program and why. To develop a richer portrait of employees' savings behavior and perspectives about the program, CFRP conducted two online surveys and three employee focus groups. The baseline survey was conducted prior to the introduction of the Automatic Savings Program, and collected basic information about employee savings behavior, financial experiences, and demographic characteristics. The exit survey was administered on April 13, 2015, shortly after the end of the evaluation period, and included questions about employees' enrollment decisions, as well as perspectives on program messaging.

The evaluation included a total of 66 employees. The overall survey response rates were 50 percent for the baseline survey and 42 percent for the exit survey [Table 1]. Due to the small sample size and moderate response rates, findings throughout this report are presented as both frequencies and percentages. In addition to online surveys, CFRP conducted one-hour focus groups at each of the three locations on April 17, 2015. To ensure an appropriate mix of responses, each focus group included employees who had and had not attended the meeting, as well as employees who had and had not enrolled.

Table 1: Survey Response Rates

Survey	Full Sample	Completed Surveys	Response Rate
Baseline	66	33	50.0%
Exit	66	28	42.4%

Source: Open Door Baseline and Exit Surveys (N=66)

To determine whether survey respondents were representative of Open Door employees at large, balance tests were conducted between respondents and non-respondents across a range of administrative variables such as hourly pay, hours worked, and location [Table 2]. Though survey respondents are not statistically different from non-respondents across observable variables, the two groups are not symmetrical either. Baseline respondents are more likely to be from the Central location, whereas exit respondents are more likely to be from the East location. Employees with higher hourly pay also appear slightly more likely to have answered both surveys, though these differences are not statistically significant. Treatment and control group employees are equally represented in both surveys. Due to the small sample size, results should be interpreted as an approximation of employee perspectives rather than representative of the employee population at large.

Table 2: Employee Characteristics by Survey Respondents and Non-Respondents

	Baseline Survey		Exit Survey	
	Non-respondents %	Respondents %	Non-respondents %	Respondents %
Open Door Site				
Central	21.2	48.5	36.8	32.1
East	42.4	27.3	31.6	39.3
M Station	36.4	24.2	31.6	28.6
Hourly Pay				
\$8.50 - \$11.50	54.5	45.5	55.3	42.9
\$11.51 - \$15.00	42.4	39.4	39.5	42.9
\$15.01 - \$20.00	3.0	15.2	5.3	14.3
Full-Time Employee	90.9	81.8	86.8	85.7
Part-Time Employee	9.1	18.2	13.2	14.3
Assigned to Treatment Group	48.5	48.5	50.0	46.4

Source: Open Door Baseline Survey, Exit Survey, and Administrative Data (N=66)

Note: Chi-square test *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Findings

This section presents findings from the evaluation. We begin with quantitative findings, which draw heavily on administrative data, enrollment data, and a series of measures from the baseline and exit surveys. In subsequent sections, we present qualitative findings from the three focus groups, with select quotes arranged by theme.

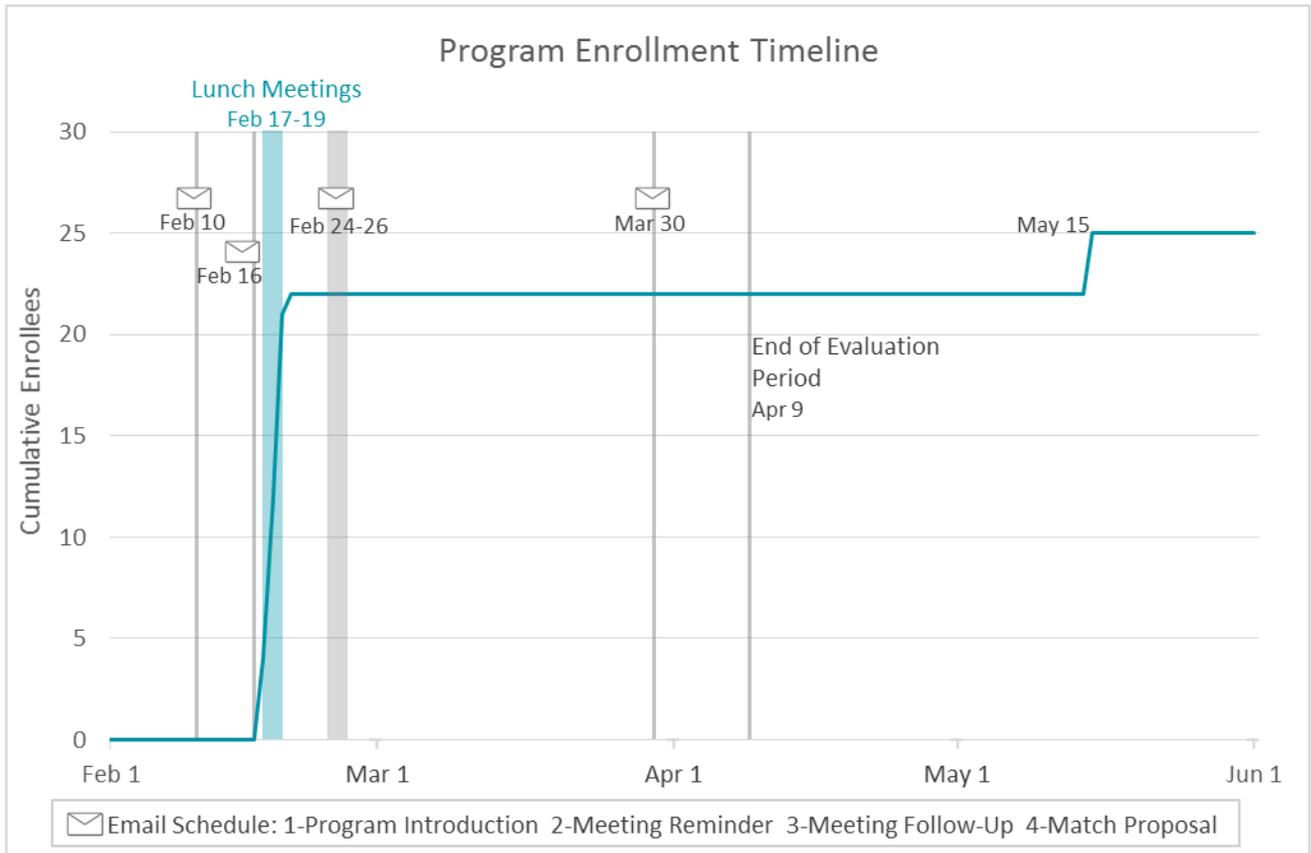
QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Table 3: Characteristics of Open Door Employees

	Number of employees	Percentage
<i>Open Door Location</i>		
Central	23	34.8
East	23	34.8
M Station	20	30.3
<i>Hourly pay</i>		
\$8.50 - \$11.50	33	50.0
\$11.51 - \$15.00	27	40.9
\$15.01 - \$20.00	6	9.1
<i>Hours Worked</i>		
Part-time	9	13.6
Full-time	57	86.4
<i>Email Group Assignment</i>		
Control	34	51.5
Treatment	32	48.5
Total	66	100.0

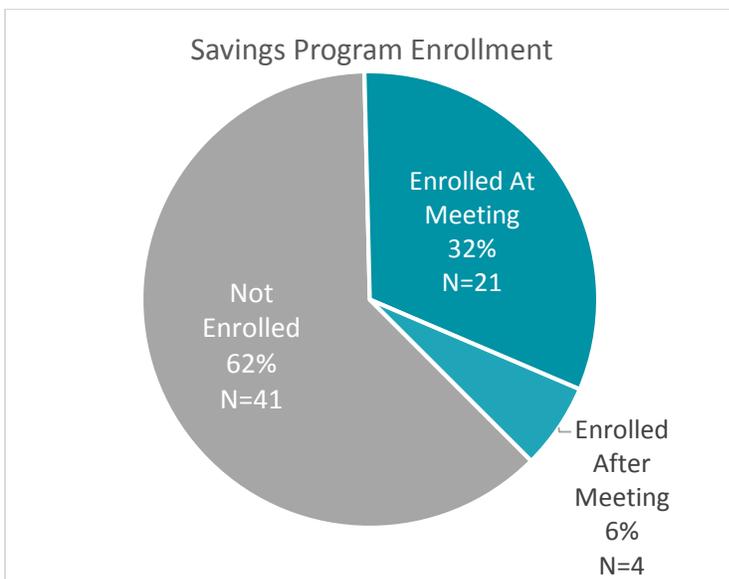
Source: Open Door Administrative Data (N=66)

Figure 2: Almost All Enrollees Signed Up During the Lunch Meetings



Source: Open Door Administrative Data (N=66)

Figure 3: Nearly Four out of Ten Employees Signed Up for the Savings Program



Source: Open Door Administrative Data (N=66)

Table 4: Primary Outcomes by Email Group Assignment

	Group Assignment					
	Control No.	Treatment No.	Total No.	Control %	Treatment %	Total %
<i>Attendance at Facilitated Meeting</i>						
No	14	10	24	41.2	31.3	36.4
Yes	20	22	42	58.8	68.8	63.6
Total	34	32	66	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Enrollment</i>						
No	23	18	41	67.6	56.3	62.1
Yes	11	14	25	32.4	43.8	37.9
Total	34	32	66	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Enrollment at Meeting (Attendees only)</i>						
No	11	10	21	55.0	45.5	50.0
Yes	9	12	21	45.0	54.5	50.0
Total	20	22	42	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Signed Up for Bank Account at Meeting (Attendees only)</i>						
No	10	12	22	50.0	54.5	52.4
Yes	10	10	20	50.0	45.5	47.6
Total	20	22	42	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Biweekly Savings Amount (Program Enrollees Only)</i>						
No. of employees	11	14	25	-	-	-
Mean	\$35.00	\$45.40	\$40.80	-	-	-
Standard deviation	\$20.60	\$33.00	\$28.20	-	-	-

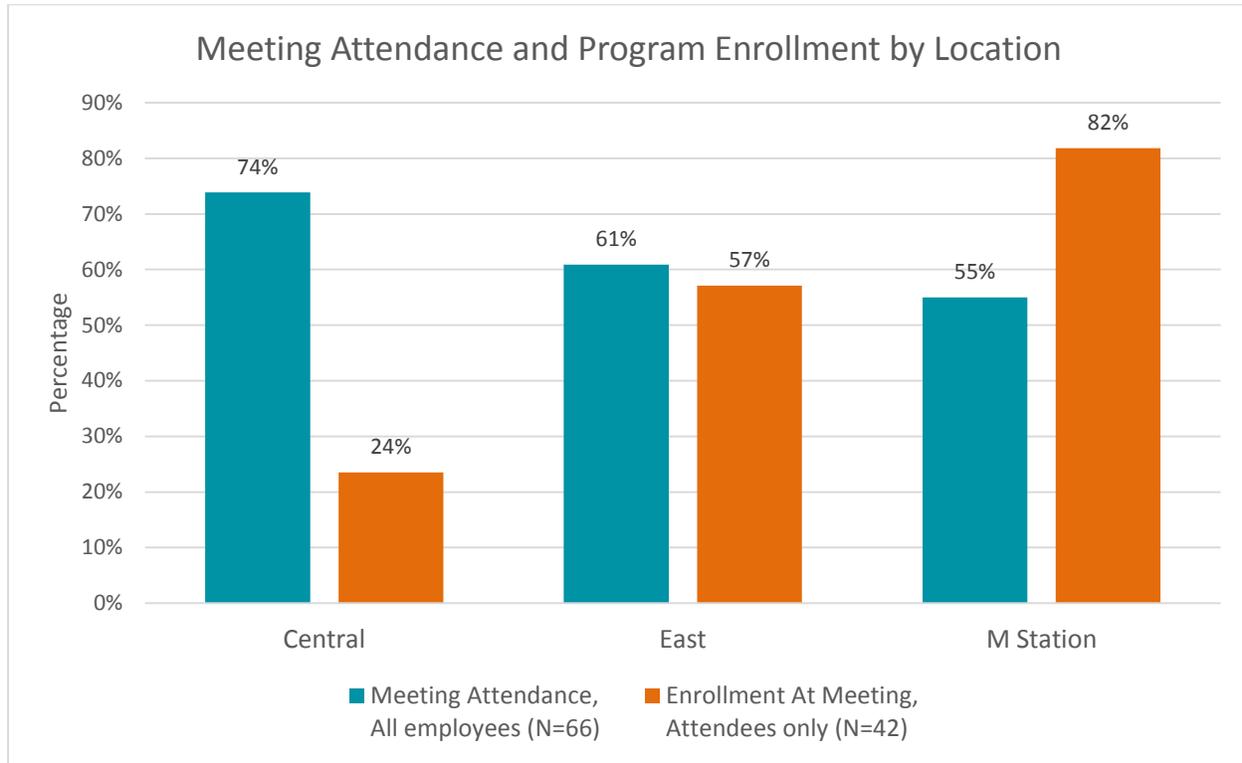
Source: Open Door Administrative Data (N=66)

Note: The difference in mean savings amounts is not statistically significant.

Table 5: Meeting Attendance and Program Enrollment by Open Door Location

	Open Door Location							
	Central No.	East No.	M Station No.	Total No.	Central %	East %	M Station %	Total %
<i>Attendance at Facilitated Meeting</i>								
No	6	9	9	24	26.1	39.1	45.0	36.4
Yes	17	14	11	42	73.9	60.9	55.0	63.6
Total	23	23	20	66	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Enrollment at Meeting (Attendees only)</i>								
No	13	6	2	21	76.5	42.9	18.2	50.0
Yes	4	8	9	21	23.5	57.1	81.8	50.0
Total	17	14	11	42	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Open Door Administrative Data (N=66)

Figure 4: Meeting Attendance Rates Not Correlated with Enrollment Rates by Location

Source: Open Door Administrative Data (N=66)

SURVEY RESULTS

Table 6: Baseline Survey Responses by Meeting Attendance, Program Enrollment, and Group Assignment. (N=33)

	Respondents		Attended Meeting		Enrolled in Program		Group Assignment	
	Total	Total	No	Yes	No	Yes	Control	Treatment
	No.	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>Do you have an account with a bank or credit union?</i>								
Yes	29	87.9	80.0	91.3	89.5	85.7	82.4	93.8
No	4	12.1	20.0	8.7	10.5	14.3	17.6	6.3
Total	33	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>What is the total balance of all of your accounts at the bank?</i>								
\$0 - \$200	9	32.1	62.5	20.0	31.3	33.3	38.5	26.7
\$201 - \$500	6	21.4	12.5	25.0	18.8	25.0	15.4	26.7
\$501 - \$1000	6	21.4	12.5	25.0	31.3	8.3	15.4	26.7
\$1001 - \$2000	2	7.1	0.0	10.0	6.3	8.3	7.7	6.7
More than \$2000	5	17.9	12.5	20.0	12.5	25.0	23.1	13.3
Total	28	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

	Respondents		Attended Meeting		Enrolled in Program		Group Assignment	
	Total	Total	No	Yes	No	Yes	Control	Treatment
	No.	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>Not including retirement funds, do you set aside a portion of your income as savings?</i>								
Yes	13	39.4	30.0	43.5	36.8	42.9	41.2	37.5
No	20	60.6	70.0	56.5	63.2	57.1	58.8	62.5
Total	33	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>How often do you contribute to your savings?</i>								
Other, please specify:	2	16.7	33.3	11.1	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7
Weekly	1	8.3	0.0	11.1	16.7	0.0	0.0	16.7
Every two weeks	4	33.3	33.3	33.3	33.3	33.3	33.3	33.3
About once per month	5	41.7	33.3	44.4	33.3	50.0	50.0	33.3
Total	12	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>What is the amount you usually contribute?</i>								
\$20 or less	3	25.0	33.3	22.2	16.7	33.3	16.7	33.3
\$21-\$50	6	50.0	66.7	44.4	66.7	33.3	66.7	33.3
\$51-\$100	1	8.3	0.0	11.1	0.0	16.7	0.0	16.7
More than \$100	2	16.7	0.0	22.2	16.7	16.7	16.7	16.7
Total	12	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Do you have money saved up that you can use for emergencies or unexpected expenses?</i>								
Yes	13	41.9	30.0	47.6	47.1	35.7	33.3	50.0
No	18	58.1	70.0	52.4	52.9	64.3	66.7	50.0
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>How often do you use your savings to pay for emergencies or unexpected expenses?</i>								
Weekly	1	7.7	0.0	10.0	12.5	0.0	0.0	12.5
Monthly	1	7.7	0.0	10.0	0.0	20.0	0.0	12.5
Every few months	7	53.8	100.0	40.0	62.5	40.0	80.0	37.5
A few times a year	1	7.7	0.0	10.0	12.5	0.0	0.0	12.5
Almost never	3	23.1	0.0	30.0	12.5	40.0	20.0	25.0
Total	13	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>How likely would you be to participate in an automatic savings program?</i>								
Very likely	9	29.0	0.0	42.9	5.9	57.1	20.0	37.5
Likely	6	19.4	10.0	23.8	23.5	14.3	13.3	25.0
Neutral/I don't know	9	29.0	50.0	19.0	35.3	21.4	33.3	25.0
Unlikely	3	9.7	10.0	9.5	17.6	0.0	6.7	12.5
Very unlikely	4	12.9	30.0	4.8	17.6	7.1	26.7	0.0
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

	Respondents		Attended Meeting		Enrolled in Program		Group Assignment	
	Total	Total	No	Yes	No	Yes	Control	Treatment
	No.	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>How much of each paycheck would you be most likely to save?</i>								
None	2	6.5	10.0	4.8	5.9	7.1	13.3	0.0
\$10 or less	3	9.7	10.0	9.5	17.6	0.0	6.7	12.5
\$11 to \$25	7	22.6	50.0	9.5	29.4	14.3	40.0	6.3
\$26 to \$50	14	45.2	20.0	57.1	35.3	57.1	26.7	62.5
\$50 or more	5	16.1	10.0	19.0	11.8	21.4	13.3	18.8
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>If your employer offered direct deposit, how likely would you be to use it?</i>								
Very likely	26	83.9	70.0	90.5	76.5	92.9	80.0	87.5
Likely	2	6.5	10.0	4.8	11.8	0.0	6.7	6.3
Neutral/I don't know	1	3.2	0.0	4.8	0.0	7.1	0.0	6.3
Very unlikely	2	6.5	20.0	0.0	11.8	0.0	13.3	0.0
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>How many different types of debt do you have? (q. 17)</i>								
0	2	6.1	0.0	8.7	10.5	0.0	11.8	0.0
1	15	45.5	50.0	43.5	47.4	42.9	47.1	43.8
2	6	18.2	10.0	21.7	15.8	21.4	5.9	31.3
3	5	15.2	10.0	17.4	5.3	28.6	17.6	12.5
4	5	15.2	30.0	8.7	21.1	7.1	17.6	12.5
Total	33	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Employee reported having at least one kind of debt (q. 17)</i>								
No	2	6.1	0.0	8.7	10.5	0.0	11.8	0.0
Yes	31	93.9	100.0	91.3	89.5	100.0	88.2	100.0
Total	33	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>How often do you worry you might not be able to make a payment towards debt?</i>								
Never	5	16.1	10.0	19.0	17.6	14.3	20.0	12.5
Rarely	4	12.9	10.0	14.3	11.8	14.3	6.7	18.8
Sometimes	6	19.4	30.0	14.3	23.5	14.3	20.0	18.8
Often	11	35.5	30.0	38.1	29.4	42.9	26.7	43.8
Always	5	16.1	20.0	14.3	17.6	14.3	26.7	6.3
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>My debt prevents me from reaching my other financial goals</i>								
Strongly agree	10	32.3	30.0	33.3	35.3	28.6	26.7	37.5
Somewhat agree	8	25.8	40.0	19.0	35.3	14.3	33.3	18.8
Neutral	9	29.0	20.0	33.3	17.6	42.9	26.7	31.3
Strongly disagree	4	12.9	10.0	14.3	11.8	14.3	13.3	12.5
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

	Respondents		Attended Meeting		Enrolled in Program		Group Assignment	
	Total	Total	No	Yes	No	Yes	Control	Treatment
	No.	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>How often do you worry about being able to meet normal monthly living expenses?</i>								
Never	2	6.5	0.0	9.5	0.0	14.3	13.3	0.0
Rarely	5	16.1	0.0	23.8	11.8	21.4	6.7	25.0
Sometimes	11	35.5	50.0	28.6	47.1	21.4	40.0	31.3
Often	7	22.6	10.0	28.6	17.6	28.6	13.3	31.3
Always	6	19.4	40.0	9.5	23.5	14.3	26.7	12.5
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>How many different types of unexpected expenses (q. 22) did you have last year?</i>								
0	7	21.2	20.0	21.7	26.3	14.3	29.4	12.5
1	11	33.3	40.0	30.4	26.3	42.9	41.2	25.0
2	9	27.3	20.0	30.4	21.1	35.7	29.4	25.0
3	4	12.1	20.0	8.7	21.1	0.0	0.0	25.0
4	1	3.0	0.0	4.3	5.3	0.0	0.0	6.3
5	1	3.0	0.0	4.3	0.0	7.1	0.0	6.3
Total	33	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Employee reported at least one kind of unexpected expense last year (q. 22)</i>								
No	7	21.2	20.0	21.7	26.3	14.3	29.4	12.5
Yes	26	78.8	80.0	78.3	73.7	85.7	70.6	87.5
Total	33	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Unexpected car expenses over \$200 in the last year (q. 22)</i>								
No	11	33.3	40.0	30.4	42.1	21.4	52.9	12.5
Yes	22	66.7	60.0	69.6	57.9	78.6	47.1	87.5
Total	33	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Unexpected medical expenses over \$200 in the last year (q. 22)</i>								
No	19	57.6	60.0	56.5	52.6	64.3	58.8	56.3
Yes	14	42.4	40.0	43.5	47.4	35.7	41.2	43.8
Total	33	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>What is the maximum amount you would be able to pay for a financial emergency?</i>								
\$100 or less	15	48.4	50.0	47.6	41.2	57.1	46.7	50.0
\$200	5	16.1	30.0	9.5	23.5	7.1	20.0	12.5
\$500	7	22.6	20.0	23.8	29.4	14.3	20.0	25.0
\$2000 or more	4	12.9	0.0	19.0	5.9	21.4	13.3	12.5
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

	Respondents		Attended Meeting		Enrolled in Program		Group Assignment	
	Total	Total	No	Yes	No	Yes	Control	Treatment
	No.	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>How are you most likely to pay for an unexpected expense of \$1,000 or more?</i>								
Other, please specify:	1	3.2	10.0	0.0	5.9	0.0	6.7	0.0
Savings	3	9.7	0.0	14.3	5.9	14.3	6.7	12.5
Credit Card	6	19.4	10.0	23.8	17.6	21.4	13.3	25.0
Loan from bank (home equity loan or line of credit)	2	6.5	10.0	4.8	5.9	7.1	6.7	6.3
Pay day loan or Short-term cash loan	1	3.2	0.0	4.8	0.0	7.1	0.0	6.3
Borrow money from friends or family	8	25.8	20.0	28.6	29.4	21.4	26.7	25.0
Skip or delay another bill/payment	5	16.1	20.0	14.3	17.6	14.3	20.0	12.5
Sell possessions	1	3.2	0.0	4.8	0.0	7.1	6.7	0.0
I cannot/do not pay for them	4	12.9	30.0	4.8	17.6	7.1	13.3	12.5
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Do you own or rent your home?</i>								
Other, please specify:	2	6.5	20.0	0.0	11.8	0.0	13.3	0.0
Own	9	29.0	20.0	33.3	23.5	35.7	20.0	37.5
Rent	17	54.8	60.0	52.4	58.8	50.0	60.0	50.0
I live with family or friends and do not pay rent	3	9.7	0.0	14.3	5.9	14.3	6.7	12.5
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Including yourself, how many adults (over age 18) live in your household?</i>								
1 (only respondent)	8	25.8	50.0	14.3	35.3	14.3	40.0	12.5
2	17	54.8	30.0	66.7	35.3	78.6	40.0	68.8
3	4	12.9	20.0	9.5	23.5	0.0	13.3	12.5
4 or more	2	6.5	0.0	9.5	5.9	7.1	6.7	6.3
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Are you the only adult in your household?</i>								
No	23	74.2	50.0	85.7	64.7	85.7	60.0	87.5
Yes	8	25.8	50.0	14.3	35.3	14.3	40.0	12.5
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Not including yourself, how many other adults in your household work for pay?</i>								
0 (respondent is only adult in HH that works for pay)	1	4.3	0.0	5.6	9.1	0.0	11.1	0.0
1	15	65.2	60.0	66.7	63.6	66.7	55.6	71.4
2	2	8.7	0.0	11.1	0.0	16.7	0.0	14.3
3 or more	5	21.7	40.0	16.7	27.3	16.7	33.3	14.3
Total	23	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

	Respondents		Attended Meeting		Enrolled in Program		Group Assignment	
	Total	Total	No	Yes	No	Yes	Control	Treatment
	No.	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>What proportion of your household expenses are you responsible for paying?</i>								
All of the expenses	4	17.4	20.0	16.7	9.1	25.0	22.2	14.3
Most of the expenses	2	8.7	20.0	5.6	18.2	0.0	22.2	0.0
Half of the expenses	8	34.8	20.0	38.9	36.4	33.3	22.2	42.9
Fewer than half of the expenses	9	39.1	40.0	38.9	36.4	41.7	33.3	42.9
Total	23	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>How many children (below age 18) are you responsible for supporting in your household?</i>								
0	19	61.3	50.0	66.7	52.9	71.4	46.7	75.0
1	6	19.4	20.0	19.0	23.5	14.3	26.7	12.5
2	4	12.9	20.0	9.5	17.6	7.1	20.0	6.3
3	2	6.5	10.0	4.8	5.9	7.1	6.7	6.3
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Are there any children under 18 in your household?</i>								
No	19	61.3	50.0	66.7	52.9	71.4	46.7	75.0
Yes	12	38.7	50.0	33.3	47.1	28.6	53.3	25.0
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>How many other individuals are you responsible for financially supporting?</i>								
0	26	83.9	90.0	81.0	82.4	85.7	73.3	93.8
1	3	9.7	0.0	14.3	11.8	7.1	13.3	6.3
2	1	3.2	0.0	4.8	0.0	7.1	6.7	0.0
3	1	3.2	10.0	0.0	5.9	0.0	6.7	0.0
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Do you have any other dependents?</i>								
No	26	83.9	90.0	81.0	82.4	85.7	73.3	93.8
Yes	5	16.1	10.0	19.0	17.6	14.3	26.7	6.3
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>How many other jobs do you have NOT including your job at Open Door Preschools?</i>								
None, it is my only job	18	58.1	50.0	61.9	58.8	57.1	46.7	68.8
1	10	32.3	40.0	28.6	29.4	35.7	46.7	18.8
2	2	6.5	10.0	4.8	5.9	7.1	6.7	6.3
3 or more	1	3.2	0.0	4.8	5.9	0.0	0.0	6.3
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

	Respondents		Attended Meeting		Enrolled in Program		Group Assignment	
	Total	Total	No	Yes	No	Yes	Control	Treatment
	No.	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>How many different types of public assistance (q. 33) do you receive?</i>								
0	3	9.1	0.0	13.0	15.8	0.0	17.6	0.0
1	24	72.7	60.0	78.3	57.9	92.9	52.9	93.8
2	1	3.0	10.0	0.0	5.3	0.0	5.9	0.0
3	2	6.1	0.0	8.7	5.3	7.1	5.9	6.3
5	2	6.1	20.0	0.0	10.5	0.0	11.8	0.0
7	1	3.0	10.0	0.0	5.3	0.0	5.9	0.0
Total	33	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Employee reports receiving at least one form of public assistance (q. 33)</i>								
No	3	9.1	0.0	13.0	15.8	0.0	17.6	0.0
Yes	30	90.9	100.0	87.0	84.2	100.0	82.4	100.0
Total	33	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Do you have any other paid jobs?</i>								
No	18	58.1	50.0	61.9	58.8	57.1	46.7	68.8
Yes	13	41.9	50.0	38.1	41.2	42.9	53.3	31.3
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Gender</i>								
Female	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>What is your marital status?</i>								
Never Married	13	41.9	40.0	42.9	41.2	42.9	46.7	37.5
Divorced	5	16.1	30.0	9.5	17.6	14.3	20.0	12.5
Married	6	19.4	0.0	28.6	17.6	21.4	13.3	25.0
Unmarried Living with Partner	4	12.9	20.0	9.5	11.8	14.3	13.3	12.5
Engaged	1	3.2	0.0	4.8	0.0	7.1	0.0	6.3
Separated	2	6.5	10.0	4.8	11.8	0.0	6.7	6.3
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>Marital status recoded (q. 36)</i>								
Single/Divorced/Separated	21	67.7	80.0	61.9	70.6	64.3	73.3	62.5
Married/Living with partner	10	32.3	20.0	38.1	29.4	35.7	26.7	37.5
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
<i>What is the highest grade or level of schooling that you have completed?</i>								
High School Diploma/GED	2	6.5	0.0	9.5	5.9	7.1	0.0	12.5
Some College	12	38.7	50.0	33.3	41.2	35.7	60.0	18.8
2-Year Degree	7	22.6	20.0	23.8	11.8	35.7	13.3	31.3
4-Year Degree	8	25.8	20.0	28.6	35.3	14.3	20.0	31.3
Master's Degree +	2	6.5	10.0	4.8	5.9	7.1	6.7	6.3
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

	Respondents		Attended Meeting		Enrolled in Program		Group Assignment	
	Total No.	Total %	No %	Yes %	No %	Yes %	Control %	Treatment %
<i>Race / Ethnicity</i>								
White	15	48.4	40.0	52.4	58.8	35.7	46.7	50.0
Black/African American	5	16.1	20.0	14.3	11.8	21.4	20.0	12.5
Hispanic	10	32.3	30.0	33.3	23.5	42.9	26.7	37.5
Other	1	3.2	10.0	0.0	5.9	0.0	6.7	0.0
Total	31	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Open Door Baseline Survey and Administrative Data (N=33)

Table 7: Exit Survey Responses by Meeting Attendance, Program Enrollment, and Group Assignment (N=28)

	Respondents		Attended Meeting		Enrolled in Program		Group Assignment	
	Total No.	Total %	No %	Yes %	No %	Yes %	Control %	Treatment %
<i>Did you attend a lunch meeting in February about Open Door's new Automatic Savings Program?</i>								
Yes, I attended the meeting	22	78.6	0	100	44.4	94.7	66.7	92.3
No, I did not attend the meeting	6	21.4	100	0	55.6	5.3	33.3	7.7
Total	28	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>At the meeting, a representative from Frost Bank, Eunice, was available to help employees set up a bank account (if needed). How important is it for employers like Open Door to provide access to a bank representative when launching an automatic savings program?</i>								
Very important	13	59.1	n.a.	59.1	25	66.7	50	66.7
Important	7	31.8	n.a.	31.8	75	22.2	30	33.3
Somewhat important	1	4.5	n.a.	4.5	0	5.6	10	0
Slightly important	1	4.5	n.a.	4.5	0	5.6	10	0
Total	22	100	n.a.	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Why didn't you attend the meeting about the Automatic Savings Program?</i>								
I did not work that day	2	33.3	33.3	n.a.	40	0	40	0
I was sick	1	16.7	16.7	n.a.	0	100	0	100
I wasn't interested in the Automatic Savings Program	3	50	50	n.a.	60	0	60	0
Total	6	100	100	n.a.	100	100	100	100
<i>Did you enroll in the Automatic Savings Program?</i>								
Yes	17	60.7	16.7	72.7	0	89.5	46.7	76.9
No*	11	39.3	83.3	27.3	100	10.5	53.3	23.1
Total	28	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>*Some respondents answering "no" enrolled in the program after taking the exit survey, and are categorized as enrollees under column 6.</i>								
<i>How influential was the information provided in the emails in your decision to enroll?</i>								
Very influential	4	23.5	0	25	n.a.	23.5	14.3	30
Somewhat influential	9	52.9	100	50	n.a.	52.9	42.9	60
Slightly influential	4	23.5	0	25	n.a.	23.5	42.9	10
Not at all influential	0	0	0	0	n.a.	0	0	0
Total	17	100	100	100	n.a.	100	100	100
<i>How influential was the information on the program flyer in your decision to enroll?</i>								
Very influential	4	23.5	0	25	n.a.	23.5	14.3	30
Somewhat influential	6	35.3	100	31.3	n.a.	35.3	28.6	40
Slightly influential	4	23.5	0	25	n.a.	23.5	28.6	20
Not at all influential	3	17.6	0	18.8	n.a.	17.6	28.6	10
Total	17	100	100	100	n.a.	100	100	100

	Respondents		Attended Meeting		Enrolled in Program		Group Assignment	
	Total	Total	No	Yes	No	Yes	Control	Treatment
	No.	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>How influential was the information provided at the lunch meeting in your decision to enroll?</i>								
Very influential	11	64.7	0	68.8	n.a.	64.7	57.1	70
Somewhat influential	5	29.4	100	25	n.a.	29.4	28.6	30
Slightly influential	1	5.9	0	6.3	n.a.	5.9	14.3	0
Not at all influential	0	0	0	0	n.a.	0	0	0
Total	17	100	100	100	n.a.	100	100	100
<i>How long do you plan to save through the Automatic Savings Program with Open Door?</i>								
I plan to keep saving through the program as long as I work	16	94.1	100	93.8	n.a.	94.1	100	90
I plan to keep saving until I reach my financial goal	1	5.9	0	6.3	n.a.	5.9	0	10
Total	17	100	100	100	n.a.	100	100	100
<i>What do you plan to use most of the savings for?</i>								
Items I want, but sometimes can't afford	1	16.7	0	20	n.a.	16.7	50	0
Short-term goals (e.g. buying a car, a vacation)	2	33.3	100	20	n.a.	33.3	0	50
Long-term goals (e.g. buying a home, paying for college)	1	16.7	0	20	n.a.	16.7	0	25
Emergencies or unexpected expenses	2	33.3	0	40	n.a.	33.3	50	25
Total	6	100	100	100	n.a.	100	100	100
<i>Some employees received an email stating that "saving \$10 per paycheck through the program would add up to \$240 by the end of one year -enough to cover an unexpected expense, or take the first step towards a larger financial goal." How influential is this information when making the decision to enroll in an automatic savings program?</i>								
Very influential	11	39.3	33.3	40.9	33.3	42.1	26.7	53.8
Somewhat influential	6	21.4	16.7	22.7	22.2	21.1	13.3	30.8
Slightly influential	3	10.7	0	13.6	0	15.8	6.7	15.4
Not at all influential	8	28.6	50	22.7	44.4	21.1	53.3	0
Total	28	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement: "The enrollment form was clear and easy to use."</i>								
Strongly agree	11	39.3	16.7	45.5	11.1	52.6	20	61.5
Agree	9	32.1	0	40.9	11.1	42.1	40	23.1
Neutral	1	3.6	0	4.5	11.1	0	6.7	0
I didn't look at it closely	3	10.7	33.3	4.5	33.3	0	13.3	7.7
I don't remember the enrollment form	4	14.3	50	4.5	33.3	5.3	20	7.7
Total	28	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

	Respondents		Attended Meeting		Enrolled in Program		Group Assignment	
	Total No.	Total %	No %	Yes %	No %	Yes %	Control %	Treatment %
<i>Is the ability to automatically save a portion of each paycheck at your bank a valuable service for Open Door to offer to its employees?</i>								
Other, please explain:	3	10.7	16.7	9.1	11.1	10.5	13.3	7.7
Yes	21	75	66.7	77.3	66.7	78.9	60	92.3
No	1	3.6	0	4.5	0	5.3	6.7	0
I don't know/neutral	3	10.7	16.7	9.1	22.2	5.3	20	0
Total	28	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Open Door Exit Survey and Administrative Data (N=28)

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

This section presents quotes taken from three focus groups conducted at each of the three Open Door locations. Quotes are de-identified and grouped by theme.

KEY

Bold = Focus group moderator

Italics = Discussion summary

Saving Is Hard

“It’s difficult, on our wages, to live in Austin and to save money.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I have two kids, and a husband and myself at home, and I make \$10 below living wage for a family of four, so I mean, we struggle every week to make ends meet.” **“Are you the only wage earner?”** “No, we have two, but I mean, we still ... we still struggle to pay for everything, so I mean ... There’s ... Every time we save up money like, it’s just, it’s gone because we can’t keep ... kids get sick, you know, like, one of us has to miss work, we’re gonna lose how much money? And I mean, I think that’s a great idea and we strive for that, and it’s not gonna happen on my earnings.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“We all got flu and pneumonia and I spent \$500 on medications recently so it’s like, my savings went from seven hundred to two hundred ... and it’s still at two hundred, but that’s not a lot to fall back on.” **“But you did have a savings, how did you accumulate that savings?”** “Income tax. I just directly deposit it into my savings because that’s the only, that’s the only decent chunk of money I get every year and I almost rely on that for survival. We plan things because we know that’s gonna come around *phew* thank goodness we can pay this other stuff off, but we never get ahead. So, like, it’s ... it seems impossible.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“It’s harder to get the motivation to put money in unless that chunk is existing, so when I had a little bit of money put in then it made me that much more eager to put more in to it, to see it hit this goal of whatever amount, and then there’s a goal for maybe next year to make it. But as far as consistently putting it in there, there’s just like, consistently things that come up too. That’s hard.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I used to be able to do that, but whenever I did though, when I was waiting tables I was probably cutting twenty bucks an hour, and so I *could* save with my significant other’s money as well, but I’m not quite in that these days, so I can’t do it.” **“So that’s kind of the level at which you could start to imagine putting away even \$10 a month or something?”** “I mean it’d have to be at least like, fifteen plus, I mean there’s ... just I mean ... I can’t fathom like we’re like, okay like we have

a board at home and it's like, okay, this is what we have to pay, this is what we want to pay, this is what we should do ... let's do these, hit these, and then ahhhhh, the dog go to the vet? We don't know. So it's really cutting it pretty close. He needs a rabies shot right now and we don't take him anywhere cuz I'm just like, I can't get him to Emancipet and that's discount, that's on a budget, ya know? True stories." – Focus Group Participant, Central

"It would have paid for our medicines when we were sick, and that's about it. ... already felt defeated because I was just like, there's no way. How about a raise? That would really help. I'm not trying to be cruel, but I mean, that's just a serious issue within this field, I mean that's well-known. And I think in Austin, it's a little lower." – Focus Group Participant, Central

“What about you, [employee], is it something that you think you would do?”

"I really don't have anything to save ... every payday I'm like, c'mon I have a dollar. ... I used to save a lot, and then my car broke and I had to buy a new car. So I bought my car with all of my savings, and then I was savings-less. And I have been savings-less for..." **“How did you manage to save the first time around?”** "I was still living with my mom, I was paying rent but it was dirt-cheap, and I was making more money then than I am now." – Focus Group Participant, Central

"I have a little bit saved up now, but it's hard to put more into it because it is like, paycheck to paycheck ... I'm right now paying out for a lot of dental stuff so that's hard. ... I am very interested in like, signing up for this program, but I'm just waiting a little bit until I can get caught up with my debts." – Focus Group Participant, East

Benefits of the Program

"I don't save, well, I mean, I do now because of the thing now but before, before no, it was just like ahh, like [employee] said, I don't have ... make more than I need so then, like, I'm ... I'm bad like, if it sits in one account and I know it's in there then I just keep using it, like there's no like, stopping it. Yeah but now because I have like, the thing that just pulls it out, and I never even see it or deal with it, then it's just sitting there. And like I did like, the fifty of each paycheck, so it's a hundred bucks a month going in there, and then, but now I'm like, I'm still managing everything that I can bump it up to seventy-five or like, working through what I don't really need so I can keep raising it. ... I like that it's a separate, a separate bank from my thing and like, they were gonna give me like, the debit card and stuff but I'm just gonna be like, not, put it somewhere where I don't even put it in my wallet like, so it's just, I don't mess with it, it's just there accumulating." – Focus Group Participant, Central

“What do you think about the fact that it's just automatically put in there? Does that make a difference?”

"It's convenient ... when I did the questionnaire online I made the point that, you know, the only thing that really makes savings is discipline and willpower. You can have something that sucks your money, some money straight into an account and that makes it easy to do it ... but if you don't have discipline and willpower, you're still gonna be pulling that out of the savings account

and spending that every month. But it makes it more convenient to save, it puts something automatic in place that isn't going to, every time you get a paycheck you're not gonna have to go through the process of thinking, 'How much can I put in my savings account?'" – Focus Group Participant, Central

"For me, like my luck of like ... not monetary control but like, feeling like 'Oh my gosh, it's already seven o'clock, why don't I just spend this 40 bucks on take-out because we're tired and there's dishes and we just, you know, it's gonna be eight o'clock. So I would just like, spend that forty bucks, but if I don't ever see that forty bucks, it's never in my check, you know?'" – Focus Group Participant, Central

"Well I always wanted, I always said I wanted to start saving money, but if I had to take it to the bank it was not gonna happen. So this program has helped me be able to start saving like I wanted to. If I don't see it out of my check, I'm fine, I know it's there." **"But to actually go to the bank, say, 'No, put this much into savings' ..."** "That wasn't happening." **"Can you tell me more about kind of why it wasn't happening?"** "Discipline. It came to me going, 'Oh I can use this for something. Oh, I can do it later.' ... that's [saving's] one of my goals that's on my window at home, and I keep looking at it and now, 'Oh, I started!'" – Focus Group Participant, East

"I don't have a walkup bank, I have a bank that deals mostly online because it's a military bank, so in order to do your savings you have to log into it, you have to move money transferred, now how much? ... You can only do this six times, don't do it more than that. But having to not go into the account myself and just put it in there, I wound up always having more than I thought I did, and I never look at it. Like [employee] said, I just, as long I ignore it, it doesn't even bother me that it comes directly out of my check, which is good because now I know how to deposit my check and say 'Oh, instead of this amount I'm willing to put in this amount because shoes are on sale,' so I know it's bad, but I now don't have the desire to do that. Because it just automatically goes there so I'm like, whatever." **"Did you deposit straight into your own account?"** "Yes, I did, which was good because I did not want to be trapped into a bank I do not think about I had no relationship with, because I had the option of using my own bank, which is why I did it." – Focus Group Participant, East

"I always tried to save, but I never ... it was too hard for me. But like everyone said, taking it out of my check without seeing it like, it's better for me if I know it's gonna go straight to my savings and I can't touch it. Because if not, then I'll be like, 'Oh I can just go out and get that money and use it for this' and then later on, I'm not gonna be able to put that money back. So not seeing it coming out, it helps me out a lot more." – Focus Group Participant, East

"The simplicity of it I was kind of like, shocked, like 'Oh that would be really simple for them to just take it off, why aren't we all doing that everywhere else?'" – Focus Group Participant, East

"Why did the rest of you go to the meeting? What was it that motivated you to go?"

"... I wanted to learn more about it, and especially because they said they can take it straight out of our check, and I wouldn't have to do anything in the form of one page, and Frost Bank, or United Way took care of it." – Focus Group Participant, East

“... Also there was like no ... cost, charge or anything to like, set it up. It was just straight, very clear and direct.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“Because as [employee] said, you can adjust that to go up or down, helps me out. ... You have that option.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“Someone said \$5 ... think about fast food, you pay \$5 five times a week, you can save \$5 every two weeks. ... So yes, there are some [employees] still interested.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“And you don’t have to go to the bank to do this. You can go to [Executive Director’s] office, get a one page paper, fill it out, hand it back, and it’ll start happening.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“I like that it came out of your wages before you got it so if you don’t see it, you don’t miss it.” – Focus Group Participant, M Station

“I like that you can change the amount.” – Focus Group Participant, M Station

“You can start off small if you’re a bit nervous because you’ve never saved before, and then eventually, you know, you could ... ‘I’m not noticing the twenty, I’m gonna make it thirty,’ and then if you don’t notice the thirty then, you know...” – Focus Group Participant, M Station

Hesitations About the Program

“I would like to have complete control of it, and have it online or something, and get to see exactly how much interest you’re making off of it, and which would be the exact amount that you want each paycheck to go into it. ... And then if you did it and put too much into savings, you can transfer it back or something. Mine was definitely like that where I came from as well, so I was really used to that, and banking in America is kind of confusing, so I stepped back from savings I guess.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“And this is not to say that whatever program was offered does or does not have this, I honestly don’t know, but I know I value very much being able to go on my phone, look at my account, search like, different things I’ve taken out, how much, what’s pending, move things around ... that control feels really good to me, and I feel ... well ... there are so many things with banking and corporations, thing I have no control over, so at least I can see ‘Oh, they’re screwing me this way,’ or whatever it might be ... it feels like I have more control there.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“I think because I already had this baking program, I hate forms, because usually they’re very complicated and involve a bunch of stuff, I don’t want to read it and if I did read it, I wouldn’t understand it, and so it’s like, I’m gonna keep that stress out of my life and go with the status quo.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“I would add in just something about like, ‘Set up by your employer,’ like what she said but with ‘This is an account set up by your employer and ... it does not need to be associated with one bank.’” – Focus Group Participant, East

“I already have another bank provider, I was like I already have an account, what incentive to have another account? One thing they mentioned, there would be no annual fees with Open Door.” – Focus Group Participant, M Station

The Meeting, the Motivator

“So now, like, if you needed it [the money in savings] then you would have to go get it out, but not decide whether I should deposit or not. Is that kind of a plus for you as well? Or does that matter?”

“I mean mine was, mine was really just that people were nice and they wanted me to do it ... and it didn’t cost anything. I didn’t want to tell them no. I came in late to the meeting and then they gave me like, my own personal meeting, all of them, so I just felt like ‘Sure, yeah, is it free? Okay tell me where to sign.’” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“Can you guys tell me why you chose to go to the meeting?”

“Oh, well, it was done on the clock, during the day right? And there was free lunch, I mean ...”
“Were you, um, if it were a meeting about, you know, making piñatas, would you have gone then too?” “If it was about making piñatas, it would perhaps count as training hours which is MORE incentive to go, and if they offer free lunch, why not? For me, like I said, I’m very happy with PECU so, you know, left to my own devices, if it were after work and we weren’t being paid, I might not have gone to it.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“If you had just gotten an email with this information and there hadn’t, well, I think you did get an email ... If you had just gotten that email, without a meeting, do you think that you would have been as likely to sign up?”

“Not *as* likely.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I would say no. I don’t even know if I would have read the whole email. If I got a paper thing in my hand, I’d be more likely to read it. But with an email, probably not. But from my boss ... but if it’s still like, ‘There’s this program that you should look into’ and it’s like, ahh, you didn’t make an appointment ...” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I think it does make sense and it’s great, but it’s better if someone’s there ... because when it comes to your money and like, a bank and like, all the fees of where it comes from when stuff comes up that if someone’s there to just answer your questions right away and be like ... here’s the paper, if you have your license give me that and it’s like BAM, mine’s all set up, I never went to the bank ... the bank called me and were like ‘Do you want your debit card?’ and I was like ‘Yeah.’ ... So I haven’t done anything, I just signed my name and that was it.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I did [know that there was a meeting], but I didn’t know there was an option to not attend.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“It was kind of treated the same way as the trainings, like, we’re having this from 12:00 to 1:00, lunch will be provided, so, you know, it will count as your break.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“And they didn’t really highlight the fact that you could do it anywhere. I didn’t feel like it was a real high pressure situation, or that they were really you know like, trolling hard for our business, so much as just presenting this idea.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“It was during lunch like, the lunch period too. ... That definitely would have mattered to me if I read the email and it’s like, ‘Oh ... some bank program, I have a bank program, I have my own system, am I going to have to miss out on lunch otherwise, where I would have been eating or getting out somewhere else in order to listen to some people talk about some program’ ... that definitely made a difference because it was during a lunch time.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“Tell me a little bit more about the meeting itself... what was your kind of general impression of the meeting?”

“I felt like it was very relaxed, very non-threatening ... very short, very vivid. Both of the presenters came, [bank employee] and ... I can’t remember the other one’s name ... and it was very informative, and it didn’t take a long time, they didn’t use words that I didn’t understand.”

“Was it [Executive Director] that shared the information with you, or [bank employee]?”

“Both. [Executive Director] opened for her and then she said, ‘This is what it is, here’s what’s going on.’ It wasn’t a mandatory thing, it wasn’t like ‘You need to do this’ ... This one was a choice, and you know, ‘It would be a good idea, here’s what you could do.’ And then I like when someone says ‘Oh, if you only have \$5, by the end of the month you’ll have this much,’ because I never see the five, I’m only thinking of the bigger amount ...” – Focus Group Participant, East

“We were all eating and it was very like, relaxed, just conversational. ... I was like, ‘Are they gonna ask for like \$50 up front or something?’ but it was just like, put whatever you want, and I was like ‘Oh.’” – Focus Group Participant, East

“Was it helpful that you could sign up right there?”

All say yes. – Focus Group Participants, East

“Was the meeting necessary though? If you’d just gotten an email, do you think you would have done it?”

All say they wouldn’t have done it with just email. – Focus Group Participants, East

“Having someone at the meeting clenched it.” – Focus Group Participant, M Station

“I think it was convenient to fill it out here, not to have to go over there and do it.” – Focus Group Participant, M Station

“The bank rep answered a lot of questions.” – Focus Group Participant, M Station

Reactions to Flyer

“Does anyone remember seeing this flyer at the meeting?”

“I don’t remember.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I remember a different flyer ... I don’t remember this one at all.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“When you look at this flyer, is it something that would entice you to want to sign up for savings? Is it, can you give me your reactions to this flyer?”

“I think it makes it seem very easy to do it, and that it’s not really too much effort.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“It does break it down into real simple ...” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“It does say ‘effortless’ ... it says ‘easy!’” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“Does it answer the questions you had?”

“I think like the top part is ... very, like, enticing, that for some people, like, it might be like, a lot ...” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“Or how it gets like, giant big, and then goes tiny tiny, and then it feels like when you get down to the bottom, like there’s something I should pay attention to right here.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“The most important part is where it’s small.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“But it does hit all of the bullet points in a very simple way.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“My initial one was like, we don’t need more paper, to be honest.” – Focus Group Participant, East

The same sentiment is echoed by two others in the East group, that the paper was not necessary.

“Just feels like over-explaining, you know? You told me, you said everything on the paper, you said it ... it becomes artwork after that.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“There’s something about like, a lot of handouts that just makes me ... check out a little. Especially at trainings and stuff where they give us handouts all the time, so now I get them and I’m like, ‘Yeah, I don’t need this.’” – Focus Group Participant, East

“Do you think just like, one copy? ... I think we had some pens and some highlighters set up, and so even if there’s just like one copy in the center for reference like, ‘Oh, I didn’t hear what she said’. ... Again, it just kind of goes into that thing of paper.” – Focus Group Participant, East

Moderator prompts discussion of the location of the information ... next to time clock?

“I would like to just see it when I walk in the doors, I would pay more attention if it was just ... around the ‘clock-in deal.’ Or if it was on the back of the bathroom door ... I would just be like ‘Oh yeah, this thing is happening here’ because I forget my emails because I get so many.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

Moderator synthesizes that it would be good to hand the form directly to employees, or put it in visible locations.

This suggestion was disputed in the East group, where two employees mentioned that they would not have noticed or been motivated by a flyer next to the time clock. The East group also suggested posting the information in the bathroom or on the bathroom door.

Reactions to Enrollment Form

“They actually ask less questions than my own bank. I’ve been with that bank for like seventeen years and when I got ready to set up a savings account last year, when I first started working for Open Door, they asked like an hour’s worth of questions ... and when they gave me this paper I was like ‘What’s this?’ and they say ‘You just sign here, sign here, and then that’s it!’ I was like ‘That’s it?’ and they’re like ‘Yeah, that’s it!’ ... This made it easier for me to open an account.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“It just seems straightforward and easy.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“If it said like \$5 it would be more of like, ‘Oh, ... it doesn’t seem like it’s taking a big chunk out, or like there’s a big minimum,’ you know? I think that that’s what I was kind of afraid of, one is that it’s not my bank and two if they’re gonna ask for like an initial ... a minimum or something.” – Focus Group Participant, East

Reactions to Emails

“If you look at this email, this is what went around. The part that’s in yellow, some of you got in your email and some of you didn’t. So if you could just ignore that yellow part for a minute, but then look at the rest of it, and ... One, tell me whether you remember seeing this email. And two, what are your reactions to it? Because it does have information about your own savings account, it tried to tell you what to bring, but why is it that we may not have seen it?”

“There’s too much information, and the important stuff is at the bottom. ... I remember this, but once again it was like, Frost, and I don’t have a lot of time, so I’m just kind of scanning it, you know? And then I see ‘Oh, Frost,’ they already told me Frost is coming, but I love my bank and don’t want to change to Frost, I really like my bank. ... although once again, I didn’t make it [to the meeting], I feel like that made me be like ‘Ehhh, I’m not ... I don’t wanna do all that.’” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I somehow didn’t ever get this or read it.” – Focus Group Participant, Central (*conflicts with later recollection*)

“And even in this, you could infer that you could use your bank, but it’s not stated like, it’s very ... It seems to steer it more towards Frost than anything else.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I think me personally, the email thing, I think I’m just bad with emails, but ... because I don’t sit at a desk and like, other people check their emails on the screen and mine pops up on my phone so then when I’m on my break or something, I just go through and if it’s long it’s just like, I don’t try ... I always check my stuff on my phone.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“If it said ‘Save ten dollars! Ask me how! [Executive Director]! Free lunch! Be there!’ I’d be like ‘YES!’” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“... [they don’t know] how much time we really have.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

(In agreement to suggestion of posting the info by the clock, or in the bathroom, if that would be more effective) “There’s a lot to read, we don’t have a lot of time.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“...I thought ‘That’s not going to cover anything.’ ... I felt like, I need to put way more than \$10 a paycheck for it to equal anything that’s gonna count for anything, because I don’t remember the last emergency that was \$240.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“What number would have gotten you?” “I would probably need to have at least probably \$500 saved by the end of the year. I like rounded numbers ... cuz I’m thinking that’s like, halfway to a thousand! I have to use bigger chunks, I’ve saved several times in my adult life and each time I had this goal of a big chunk, it wasn’t like ‘let me try to get a little bit’ ... it’s the little bits that get you there, but it’s more, there’s more of a drive to it ... like, ‘I have a thousand man! A

thousand.’ Or, ‘I have five hundred!’ That’s solid. And kids are expensive! When things go wrong with kids, they go really wrong.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

Two participants in the Central group spoke about receiving the treatment language, and how it stuck with them; however, records show neither one received the treatment email.

“It felt like the emails were written as promotions.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I read it top to bottom, and nothing stuck out more than anything else for me. ... At what point was I interested? The second sentence, ‘This program allows you to have a portion of your paycheck ...’ And then I kept reading to figure out. ... Well and then I went immediately for fee, I was looking for fee, so that helped too.” **“So seeing no fee was helpful...”** “Yeah.” – Focus Group Participant, East

(In response to a question about the email treatment language) “I got the email and then that’s the first thing that I noticed ... because I always look for money first, and then when I looked for it I thought ‘Hmm okay,’ because I’ve done it before and that helps, so this was just a reminder, and then when it was automatic and I didn’t have to do it, then that was just easier.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“Also I get a lot of emails but I don’t get a ton from [Executive Director] and [Site Supervisor] like, it’s a reasonable amount, so when they send something it’s usually like ... it’s relevant. So I think the email, given that they’re not overwhelming us with emails all the time, I think it’s effective for this school.” – Focus Group Participant, East

Reactions to Evaluation Materials

Though focus group participants were not asked about the evaluation materials, two participants in the East Focus Group noted that the baseline survey was helpful because it got them thinking about their finances. One mentioned having several payday loans and how the survey helped her to see they were not worth it.

“I think what put me in motion is ... when I did the survey and one of the questions was asking about, I mean, that really opened my eyes, was like, ‘If something happened, do you have the money to pay for an unexpected cost?’, and I’m thinking ‘My car!’ and I’m like ‘No, I don’t!’” – Focus Group Participant, East

Desire for Direct Deposit

“Does anybody know, is direct deposit part of the deal? Or do they not do that yet?” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I don’t think that we as a company can do the signup for direct deposit. That’s part of the problem.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I wish we could do direct deposit.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“[With direct deposit available] I would sign up for Frost in a heartbeat.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

Employees talking over each other about how they want direct deposit. – Focus Group Participants, Central

“I think everybody would like direct deposit.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“You have to figure out when you’re gonna get to the bank, before it closes ...” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“And with Frost, you do have the advantage of, you can take a picture of a check and have it deposited that way, which is easier than having to go to the bank.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“It kind of feels like a compromise because so many people want direct deposit, but he just kind of like ‘I can do *this* for you guys ...’” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I initially thought it was direct deposit, and I was like ‘YES!’ and then it wasn’t so it was kind of disappointing.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“What’s the limit on ... couldn’t you just kind of put your whole check amount, and then it’d be direct deposit anyways?” – Focus Group Participant, Central

The M Station group also discussed ways in which the program could act as a stand-in for direct deposit, in particular the option to take a picture of your check and have it deposited that way.

“Mine was more like, the automatic savings programs, because I remember my husband was always asking ‘They don’t do direct deposit?’ I’m like ‘Not yet,’ and then when this happened I was like ‘Ohhh we got this!’ and then he was like ‘Okay, well do that.’ ... I mean it was easy for me, once I saw automatic savings I was like, ‘Yes.’” – Focus Group Participant, East

“He was at that meeting too when it was finally addressed like, can we get just automatic deposit? Direct deposit? Like, can we do that? And then he explained why we don’t have that and like ... he does want to pay us more, want to make it easy, but it’s like, out of his hands. It’s not like he’s just choosing not to do that. And then that he went out of his way to get this, you know? So that was like, also nice to hear.” – Focus Group Participant, East

Misconceptions About Whether You Can Use Your Own Bank

“What was your overall impression of the meeting? Was it well-organized? Was it informational?”

“It was kind of informational, I had some questions that I don’t think were really answered. Like, I just wanted to know more about like, if I could do the savings program with my personal bank, Chase, and so Frost Bank ...” **“Which you can ...”** “Yeah and at the time, I didn’t get that. I don’t think they told us that.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“But they can set up the automatic savings with other ... [banks]?” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I just wanted to be able to use a bank that’s like, nationally accessible, instead of Frost which is like, only in Texas. It said on the form, though, that you could use any bank, and it said how, the information you would need to be able to do that, but they didn’t talk about it at all, because they were promoting Frost.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I thought it was a great idea, you know like, I honestly thought it was laughable considering I don’t have any money to save, but at the same time like, if I would’ve known that I could have used University Federal Credit Union, which is what I use and I love that place, so like, I’ve never had a problem in like seven years of banking with them, not even by a penny. Like I probably would’ve been like, you know, give me the information on that, I at least want to think like, could I throw maybe even five bucks into savings? It might replace a tire, you know?” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“Whenever I was at the meeting ... I read how you could use your own bank, but then I needed some information. So had I known that I needed that information from my bank before the meeting, I would have signed up right then, but I didn’t have time in the meeting to go get it real quick, because it was over, you know? It was time to go back to work.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I didn’t think that you could use my own bank. And I didn’t know that I still have time to do this.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I kind of felt like with Open Door like, I didn’t want to be confined to Open Door’s bank, you know? I was like, ‘This is a great option, but umm, I don’t want to be with Frost,’ you know? Like, I wanted to be able to have like ... my own national bank that I can use.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I think maybe just that there was more clarity about the fact that we had more options than signing up with Frost ... I don’t mind Frost being there and representing themselves and offering the things that they offered, but I don’t think any of us really had the idea that, other than I think [employee] picked up on it, that you could do it at any bank. We ... I think we all were under the impression that this was through Frost.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“We had the meeting and then they were like ‘Okay ... if you want to open up an account with Frost just go talk with them.’ So it kind of felt like step one was like, introduce the program, and step two was like, okay ... open it with Frost.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I see, I see what you’re saying to each other where it says that, that wouldn’t convince me. Even just reading that, I’d be like ‘Nahhh, that’s just linguistic ... they’re tricking me,’ and they’re being like ‘Yeah, your Frost account, of course you’re Frost we’re talking about Frost, right?’ ... So like, to put in bold letters like, to clarify: ‘YOU CAN USE A NON-FROST ESTABLISHED ACCOUNT,’ because when I read that I think like yeah, Frost is talking about their program ...” – Focus Group Participant, East

Misconceptions About Who Is Offering the Savings Program

“Of those of you who were there, did you get the sense that Frost was trying to sell you something?”

“I just thought it was like, a Frost program.” – Focus Group Participant, Central (*Two others agree.*)

“Well they brought all that stuff too like, all the cool swag. Lighters, keychains, cozies, there’s coin purses, pencils ...” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“And I’ve heard a teacher or two ask like what kind of deal is [Executive Director] putting together with Frost bank? Why are they trying so hard to get us to start an account with Frost? Is there some deal with Frost that we’re making? And so I’ve heard that ... and I personally don’t think, you know, like, that’s the motivation. But, ahh, I know that that thought exists. I don’t think there’s any particular incentive on his part to make that [partnership with Frost] happen, other than just trying to help out the teachers.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I think personally the reason I didn’t want to do Frost is because they obviously came by and umm ...” “They came by to one of our meetings before this whole thing started.” “... it wasn’t about direct deposit or savings, it was just like, we have a partnership with Open Door and we would like you guys to create an account if possible. That was back in August, so I kind of felt like maybe there was a relationship there.” – Focus Group Participants, Central

“And it was kind of monotonous you know? Because we already had a meeting about signing up for an account with Frost ...” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I was like, under the impression that this was Frost’s whole, the same thing was theirs and it wasn’t like ... like it was like, their idea presenting to us? But I think it would have been better if it was like, [Executive Director] saying like, ‘We’re doing this, but we brought this representative that you could get it all done, say, if you choose this bank.’ But I didn’t feel like it was [Executive Director], I just found this out, I didn’t even know. I thought this was Frost the whole time.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“Me too.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

"I'll say that just in reading it just now, I wasn't sure ... I assumed it was Frost Bank." – Focus Group Participant, East

In the East group, after a number of questions/points of confusion regarding who sent the emails, forms, the surveys, etc., the moderator finally stops the meeting to explain the whole program and its evaluation, including the roles of [Executive Director], Frost, United Way, and UT.

"I think [Executive Director] is probably kind of humble, it says 'WE are excited to announce the launch' ... I, at that point, was also thinking that it was some sort of bank program. I was going into the meeting thinking that this is from Frost trying to get more customers, and I know that there's certain numbers that they have to meet for savings ... and so I thought that they had come to [Executive Director], but then seeing [Executive Director] express his own excitement, that's when I was like 'Ahhhh, I don't see [Executive Director] excited about too much, so I think this is, you know, more personal for him.'" – Focus Group Participant, East

"How would you describe [the program] to other people if you were ... able to tell employees about this sort of program?"

"It's a convenient, it's really a no-brainer." **"But how would you describe the program? So they don't know, they've never heard about it ..."** "... Okay well Frost Bank initiated this program, you don't have to pay any money for it, you don't have to have a minimum ... amount in it, you can either use your existing account or you can open a new account if you don't have one, and umm, if you just have \$5 extra, which is like, you know, a number two, then that's it. If you can forego a number two every day then you've got this." – Focus Group Participant, East

"In your opinion, who is offering this program?"

"Frost Bank." "Yeah." "Yeah." – Three Focus Group Participants, M Station

"That's not actually true."

"Open Door ... [Executive Director] is." – Same M Station Participant who initially said "Frost Bank"

"I forgot to mention that Frost bank did come back, they were here for the first time back in December, that's when a co-worker had opened up the account. I was apprehensive about it and she told me about it and she was like, 'You should come to this one' because there was a rep out here to be able to ask questions, and because they did come back ... that did make me ... a little more curious to actually coming in and seeing, 'You know, let me take a better look at it. They've come back, let me try it out.'" – Focus Group Participant, M Station

Appreciation for Frost Bank and the Bank Representative

“What made you guys to decide to open the account?”

“You know it was, for me, it was a very small motivation because ahh, Public Employees Credit Union accepts us as public employees, so we can, we can join the PECU without any problem, and I did years ago and they’re great, I don’t have any problem with them. The only thing that Frost kind of has over them is that they offer the free checking whereas with public employees I think it’s like, three or four dollars a month. So, so it’s very small motivation, but I’m still motivated to do it just because there’s, there’s a few benefits to Frost that don’t exist with PECU ahh, I, the, the idea that you can just take a picture of your check with a phone and get your deposit your checks that way is very appealing. Umm, ahhh, there’s a, and there’s a few other things, that’re free ... the idea that the checking is free and, you know, and the small incentive of the \$50 match, and you know it all, it all kind of adds up to make it worthwhile, and the idea that I could have a bank account at both places and use one to just be a savings account that I throw money into and don’t mess with, and use the other for actual checking is appealing to me.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I would like the option of both because I was like, actually coincidentally getting frustrated with Bank of America specifically, so looking to maybe open a new account. But at the same time it’s a pain in the butt, and so I was thinking maybe I would stick with my other two banks, and so I liked kind of having the option. I ended up opening the Frost account because it was no fee, and Bank of America was charging me crazy.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“I kind of want to speak fondly of Frost; I got a call the other day and someone, you know, [bank employee] introduced himself, he said ‘Hey, I want to call and introduce myself. I see that you’re part of this program. I also see that you don’t have a checking account, we can get you a free checking account,’ and I was like ‘Oh, okay!’ and he was like ‘come to the branch’ ... and so I’d never had that personal experience like that. ... They’re cool over at that branch.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“Why the new account? What was the impetus for that? Did you not have an account before? Was that one of the reasons?”

“Yes.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“If this wasn’t provided and they said ‘Just go out and open an account and come back’ ... would that have been a viable solution for you? Or was it really helpful that you could open an account right there?”

“It was helpful but still I probably would have went and talked with someone, because I was trying to open an account.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“I don’t think I would have gone out and opened an account.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“Frost doesn’t charge you. ... We don’t get automatic direct deposit, and Wells Fargo won’t cash my check, you know, even though I’ve been there for so long, I’ve worked here for three ... they won’t cash it. They’ll give me like one or two hundred dollars, but they won’t cash it. I have to go to Speedy Cash or having to get the whole ... but Frost, because Open Door worked with Frost, I can just get all that money all at once, and with no fees either! So that was good. I really liked that.” – Focus Group Participant, M Station

“If the person from Frost Bank wasn’t at the meeting to allow you to open the accounts, do you think that you would have opened the account?”

“No.” – Several Focus Group Participants, M Station

“Probably not ... finding time to go to the bank ...” – Focus Group Participant, M Station

“For me that’s big, like, finding the time ... it was very helpful ... to have someone actually be here.” – Focus Group Participant, M Station

“Especially in this field, like one-two-three-four of us right now are going to school, one that will be starting school, so between working full-time and going to classes. ... A lot of staff really want direct debits but that’s just not an option because there is other staff who actually can’t have a bank account, for other reasons, so you know, if you did direct debit these people won’t get paid, so it’s one of the other financial implications. So I think the more things we do for the staff, even if it seems really small, anything that’s a convenience that helps them, you know, helps us with time management is great.” – Focus Group Participant, M Station

“Frost will call me and say ‘Hey Ms. [employee], this is such and such from Frost bank, is everything okay? I’m just calling to check on you, is everything going alright with your bank account? And I’m like, ‘What you say? You ain’t calling telling me that everything is shut down because someone is trying to take my money?’” – Focus Group Participant, M Station

Discussion of Frost highlighters, swag, and pens. – Focus Group Participants, East

“As the administrator, for me, there was no ... it wasn’t a big imposition to do. Like, from Open Door’s standpoint it didn’t really cost us anything ... it wasn’t a big imposition. Arranging the schedule maybe was the only thing that you had to do, and it’s just been, for me, it’s just been win-win-win. ... If you walk in the Frost Bank, and they realize that you’re from Open Door, you’re a rockstar.” – Focus Group Participant, M Station

“Don’t have to have had an account with a certain bank, and you don’t have to worry about fees, you don’t have to worry. ... I’m not gonna be charged for having deposited my check this way, or I have to cash it this way.” – Focus Group Participant, M Station

Discussion that you can take a photo of check and money will be deposited next day, almost like direct deposit. – Focus Group Participants, M Station

Recollection of the Match Email

“I don’t know if I read the whole email now that I think about it. I mean I do remember the fifty, I just don’t know what the terms were. I just know it was like ... there was fifty bucks coming if you signed up and saved whatever ... maybe because I was already saving fifty that I read it as ...” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I didn’t open it I mean, it’s one of those ... you’re scanning emails trying to delete stuff and then I was like ‘Well I did’ ... So I remember seeing it, like in the headlines I’m pretty sure? But I didn’t read it because I was like ‘Well I didn’t sign up for that program, and I can’t use my bank, so...’” – Focus Group Participant, Central

Two employees indicate that they know what it is.

“Yeah, I remember that.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“When you get \$50 in your account, when you save up to \$50, then Open Door or United Way is going to match that fifty to your account ... I believe it’s in October.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“Yeah, I probably read the email but umm, I have like, a hundred thousand other things to do, and I think I had forgot, so now that I know I’m happy. (Laughter) But it was not a motivating factor, clearly did not resonate in my mind because I did not remember.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“I probably read it but then, like *poof* it just passed by me.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“Getting the \$50 once you save \$50. Even if you’ve got \$50 now, you still won’t get it until October 1st, because that’s a budget thing. ... And I thought it was great, I was just like, I’m Scottish, and I was like ‘FREE MONEY!’ you know? It was really, really good.” – Focus Group Participant, M Station

Misconceptions About the Match

“It matches you \$50 if you put in \$50 ... if you *save* \$50 ... by that day, right?” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I remember seeing that email and thinking like, ‘Oh that’s something that’s really enticing’ like, I would actually want to do that because it adds up like, if you do \$50. And my understanding was it was like, \$50 a check and you would be matched for each check? Or is it just like one time?” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“So like, if you have fifty bucks by October you get fifty bucks? I thought it was at the same time as you saved the fifty.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I thought it would be sooner ... In my head I was thinking once you hit fifty you get fifty, so I was like ‘Oh, there would be an extra fifty,’ but if it really is October, then I feel like I would’ve been like ‘That’s so far away.’ But then I get that other people are putting small amounts to build, but I would like it better if it was like, when you get fifty you get fifty.” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“I started off with thirty and then I moved it to fifty.” – Focus Group Participant, East

Appreciation and Affection for the Executive Director

“I saw it ... more of like he’s on our side type thing, as in like, I can’t raise the wages or you know, I’m trying as much as I can to work with it and I know that like most of the people here have children and families and stuff so like, let me throw this out to offer something to help to like, get to start saving. ... I don’t have as many expenses as they do, but that’s what I thought it was like ... like ‘I can’t raise everyone’s pay you know, because I only get so much money, but let me try to do this to help ... to ease the burden.’” – Focus Group Participant, Central

“He’s just a pawn. (Laughter). I actually trust [Executive Director] quite a bit so like, when [employee] was talking about him being in the meeting talking to her personally, that I felt resonated with me. Or when [employee] would stop and talk ... that would resonate with me because I have a relationship with those people and we see each other all the time. And they’re considering it. So that’s very effective for me.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“Was the meeting necessary though? If you’d just gotten an email, do you think you would have done it?”

“It’s different when someone’s talking to you.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“Seeing also, like, [Executive Director] seemed like he was like, ‘I have this really cool thing I want to share with you guys.’” – Focus Group Participant, East

“He was excited.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“I already love [Executive Director] – that just makes me love him more.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“I’ve only been here like, almost two years, and I came from places where I’ve had bosses. ... I just feel like [Executive Director] has a lot of leadership qualities, so ... it was easier.” – Focus Group Participant, East

“So I’ve been here for about a year and it’s very different than any other places that I’ve worked at, and even compared to the last preschool I came from, and so you immediately walk in and

you feel at home, you know? And why do I feel this way about all these people? I mean, it's a really different place. And this really, even after a full year of kind of understanding that piecemeal, understanding of why this feels like a community, ... this really for me, actually, made it really crystal clear what [Executive Director] cares about. I was like 'Ohhh, I get it now, he's really just trying to protect the people that are protecting the values we all have.' And so ... this was really kind of evidential for me, really kind of sealed the deal, like 'Okay, I got you [Executive Director].'" – Focus Group Participant, East

Conclusion

The workplace savings initiative tested in this pilot shows significant promise as a simple and relatively inexpensive strategy for promoting financial stability among low- and middle-wage employees. Nearly 4 in 10 employees enrolled in the Automatic Savings Program; on average, enrollees elected to save \$40 every two weeks, the equivalent of more than \$2,000 per year. It seems clear that the pilot would not have achieved this level of success without the on-site lunch meetings administered by Open Door's Executive Director. These meetings provided a forum for employees to learn about the program, ask questions, and enroll on the spot. Equally critical to the success of the lunch meetings was the presence of a local banking representative, who helped employees open bank accounts and complete enrollment forms during the meeting itself.

Though this approach proved an effective recruitment strategy, it also caused a degree of confusion among employees—most of whom believed that the savings program was being offered by the bank, not their employer. Furthermore, few employees seemed to understand that they could enroll in the program using an existing bank account. Misconceptions like these underscore the impact of the lunch meetings, which served to reinforce the idea that the program was affiliated with the local bank, despite information to the contrary in the program materials. An additional caveat, which bears noting in relation to the high rate of enrollment, is the lack of a direct deposit option at Open Door. Ultimately, this evaluation was unable to disentangle the desire for automatic savings from a more general desire for direct deposit. Many employees mentioned in focus groups that enrolling in the savings program was the next best thing to having direct deposit, implying that take-up rates may not be as high at an organization that already offers direct deposit.

Finally, this evaluation provides some evidence in favor of messaging language that highlights a projected future savings amount (from enrolling) and the possibility of regret (from not enrolling). These messages, embedded in the treatment emails, appear to have had some effect on meeting attendance, enrollment rates, and savings amounts. These results should be interpreted with caution, however, given the small sample size. Moreover, feedback from focus groups suggests that many employees did not remember, or correctly remember, the content of program emails. Nevertheless, consistently positive outcomes among the treatment group are encouraging, and point to a need for further study of these messaging tactics—particularly on a larger sample.