



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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**MAYOR A C WHARTON UNVEILS \$12 MILLION “FAMILY REWARDS”
PROGRAM TO COMBAT INNER-CITY POVERTY**

**NYC MAYOR MICHAEL BLOOMBERG AND SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND
PARTNER WITH WHARTON ADMINISTRATION, SEEDCO, WOMEN’S
FOUNDATION ON NEW CONDITIONAL CASH TRANSFER PROGRAM**

MEMPHIS, TN – Memphis Mayor A C Wharton, Jr. announced today that recruitment has begun for the city’s “Family Rewards” conditional cash transfer program. Mayor Wharton was joined at the announcement by Robert Lipscomb of the City of Memphis’ Division of Housing & Community Development, Ruby Bright of the Women’s Foundation for a Greater Memphis, Meredith Hennessy of Seedco, and Allegra Blackburn-Dwyer of the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity. The announcement was made during a meeting of the Ascend Family Economic Security program, a new program of the Aspen Institute

The Family Rewards program provides cash incentives to encourage families to achieve milestones that lead to better health, education, and employment outcomes for three years. Participating families will be eligible to receive as much as \$2,000-\$3,000 for completing a range of activities including high school attendance and academic performance, families’ medical check-ups, and passing the GED exam. Family Rewards, which is built on the success of programs in more than 20 countries, uses incentives to help build human capital, increase self-sufficiency, and reduce poverty.

“Tomorrow, the U.S. Census Bureau will release its localized poverty data for Memphis, which makes today’s announcement particularly relevant,” said Mayor Wharton. “Too many Memphians see no path forward and no way up and out of crippling, multi-generational poverty. The ripple effect on crime, education, and housing values are evident everywhere.

“Family Rewards is a goal-oriented, data-driven initiative focused on developing our people and investing in their futures. Until we have addressed the lack of economic empowerment felt by so many people in our city, it will be impossible for Memphis to become a true city of choice.”

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“The Social Innovation Fund grant – and the new federal partnership it establishes – create a new way for New York City’s Center for Economic Opportunity to share its most successful pilots with other cities,” said New York City Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg. “Great initiatives like Family Rewards in Memphis can benefit from what we've learned in New York, and cities across the country can improve their programs based on Memphis' experience.”

Family Rewards is one of five programs being replicated in cities across the country by the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City with the support of the federal Social Innovation Fund, a new public-private partnership designed to expand effective anti-poverty programs. The five programs, including Family Rewards, were originally piloted in New York City by the Center for Economic Opportunity, which was established by Mayor Bloomberg in 2006 to design and test innovative anti-poverty programs. Other cities participating in the Mayor’s Fund/Social Innovation Fund initiative include New York City; Cleveland, Ohio; Kansas City, Missouri; Newark, New Jersey; San Antonio, Texas; Tulsa, Oklahoma; and Youngstown, Ohio.

Seedco and its partner organizations, Urban Strategies Memphis HOPE and Porter-Leath are working closely with the Memphis City Schools, the Tennessee Department of Human Services, and Housing & Community Development to identify eligible participants – families who live in the City of Memphis, receive cash assistance or food stamps, and have a student in the ninth or tenth grade. In addition to the opportunity to earn financial rewards, participating families will also be assigned an advisor who will help them manage their incentives as well as have access to other services such as financial literacy counseling and no-fee bank accounts.

Eligible families will be pre-selected using data provided by the Memphis City Schools and will be contacted by the local partners and invited to enroll in the program. Because Family Rewards is a research demonstration project, researchers will collect data on families that receive the intervention and families that do not. For this reason, 600 enrolled families will be eligible for incentives and an additional 600 families will be assigned to a control group. . MDRC, a non-profit social research and policy organization, is consulting on the program design and will lead the evaluation of the program.

Memphis was included in the Mayor’s Fund application to the Social Innovation Fund at Mayor Wharton’s request. Family Rewards-Memphis is an \$11.53million initiative. The City is required to raise half of those funds from non-federal sources to supplement the investment by Social Innovation Fund, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Open Society Foundations, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The City of Memphis has already pledged \$1.9 million toward this effort, and has engaged the Women’s Foundation of Greater Memphis to lead the effort to raise the remaining balance over three years. pe

For more information about Family Rewards-Memphis, please contact Seedco Senior Program Associate Danielle Schonbaum at (901) 405-7880 or dschonbaum@seedco.org.

What: Family Rewards-Memphis announcement

Where: Peabody Hotel, 149 Union Avenue (Venetian Room)

When: 4:00 p.m.

More info: Mary Cashiola, 901 576 6032

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ABOUT THE SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND. Established by the 2009 Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act and championed by President Obama, the Social Innovation Fund (SIF) is a new public-private investment vehicle designed to identify effective approaches to addressing critical social challenges, and support the replication and expansion of these programs by non-profit organizations. Managed by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the Fund will provide up to \$50 million to intermediary organizations nationwide, to be matched 1:3 by private funds.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY. Created in December 2006, the NYC Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) has piloted and tested dozens of innovative anti-poverty programs in support of the working poor, disconnected youth, and families with young children. Designed in collaboration with leading experts and 20 New York City agencies, CEO programs have been implemented in partnership with more than one hundred non-profit organizations, and are evaluated by CEO and independent evaluation firms.

ABOUT SEEDCO. Seedco is a national nonprofit organization founded in 1987 that advances economic opportunity for people, businesses, and communities in need. Seedco designs and implements innovative programs and services around workforce development, work and family supports, and community finance and small business services. Seedco implements the Family Rewards Program in New York City and in Memphis, TN.

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