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A LETTER FROM COMPASS

When Compass launched its first FSS partnership in 2010, we had no idea where the journey would take us. We didn't know it would lead us to deep and meaningful partnerships with some of our country’s leading housing providers, including Boston Housing Authority, Cambridge Housing Authority, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Metro Housing | Boston, Philadelphia Housing Authority, Preservation of Affordable Housing, and The Caleb Group. We couldn’t have imagined it would take us to a place where we’d be able to say that the thousands of families we’ve served through FSS have saved nearly $6 million in escrow – or that we’d be in a position to lift up the voices of program participants and practitioners from around the country to influence FSS policy at the federal level. We certainly didn't imagine that it would come to look like the conference of 160+ FSS champions we saw this past October either.

On October 23rd-24th, 2019, Compass Working Capital hosted its fourth annual National FSS Conference. Attendees included FSS practitioners, funders, representatives from the Department of Housing & Urban Development, Compass staff, and other stakeholders who gathered from around the country for two days of learning and networking.

These two days gave us all an opportunity to take a step back from our day-to-day work and think about the big picture, discuss tough challenges, and explore innovative solutions. As an FSS practitioner, we know it can sometimes feel like you are doing your work all on your own. But the truth is – and the National FSS Conference and FSS Link community exist to prove it – is that none of us are on our own. We saw that in the 160+ attendees at this conference who care deeply about FSS – and we see it every day in the now 600+ members of the FSS Link community who couldn't all be with us at the event but also care deeply about FSS and the families they serve.

We hope your experience at the National FSS Conference inspired you, challenged you, and equipped you with new ideas and tools to unlock the potential of your FSS program. We look forward to the upcoming year of collaboration on FSS Link and to seeing you all in 2020 for the next conference.

With Gratitude,
The Compass Team
The FSS Link community is comprised of members from around the country.
WHAT ATTENDEES ARE SAYING

“This was an amazing conference. To feel the heart and passion from networking with others doing this work was so invigorating. Thank you for your time and energy in making this happen and putting this conference together. There is nothing else like it fully focusing on FSS. The Compass Working Capital team is great and so knowledgeable.”
- Vanessa Casaubon, Housing Works (OR)

“The information presented was informative and addressed many levels of FSS programming and services. The information about the Program Coordinating Committee was new for me.”
- Scarlette Jones, POAH Communities (IL)

“Networking with creative people who are working toward the same goal as I am but doing it in a different way [was the most valuable part of this event]. Learning from others’ approaches broadens my skill set when confronting issues within my program.”
- Robert Santoriello, Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh

Statistics from the Conference Feedback Survey:

- 98% believe the knowledge and skills they learned at the conference will be useful to their job.
- 100% of attendees felt represented in the speakers at the event.
- 97% of attendees believe the conference focused meaningfully on issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
FSS SUPPORT IN CONGRESS

This past summer, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to increase federal funding for FSS by more than 30%. In June, Representative Ayanna Pressley, from the 7th district of Massachusetts, stood on the floor of the House to call for this increase in funding and to talk about the power of the FSS program. We were honored to share this short video message from her at the start of the event. Click the image below to watch the video.

A PRESENTATION FROM HUD

Conference attendees were excited to hear from Anice Chenault, FSS Program Manager at HUD, on what to expect in the coming year for FSS at a national level. Attendees also learned about next steps for the implementation of the FSS legislation passed in 2018.

To review the slides from this presentation, visit FSS Link. Please reach out to HUD directly at fss@hud.gov with any questions.
THE COLOR OF MONEY: BLACK BANKS AND THE RACIAL WEALTH GAP

When the Emancipation Proclamation was signed in 1863, black people owned less than one percent of the United States’ total wealth. More than 150 years later, that number has barely budged. In this keynote presentation, Mehrsa Baradaran, Professor of Law at University of California at Irvine and author of How the Other Half Banks and The Color of Money, took us on a walk through history from the Civil War to present day to explain how racist policies have blocked black people from building and retaining wealth for centuries.

The Color of Money

The Color of Money examines the persistence of this racial wealth gap by focusing on credit and banking policies and shows how these created and perpetuated the racial wealth gap. In her book, Baradaran calls attention to this wealth gap by focusing on black banks. She challenges the myth that black banking is the solution to the racial wealth gap and argues that black communities can never accumulate wealth in a segregated economy.
CREDIT REPORTING: EXPLORING BARRIERS AND SOLUTIONS TO CREDIT BUILDING FOR FAMILIES WITH LOW INCOMES

A good credit record is critical to building assets and securing a strong financial future. It can mean access to homeownership, affordable credit products, better insurance rates, rental housing, and even certain jobs. For families with low incomes in particular, we also know that a strong credit score can be an important first asset.

In this keynote, we heard from Chi Chi Wu, an expert on credit reporting issues. Chi Chi discussed the challenges related to building and maintaining a good credit record and how they disproportionately impact underserved communities, as well as the simple steps practitioners can take in their work to help the families they serve deal with these issues.

- 20% of consumers have errors in credit reports and 13% have errors that affect their credit scores

- African-American and Latinx individuals are strongly over-represented in the lowest credit scoring categories.

- 71% of African-American middle-income households are called by bill collectors compared to 50% of white middle-income households, despite similar rates of default and late payments
  Source: The Color of Debt, ProPublica 2015
The first day of the National FSS Conference included a variety of interactive breakout sessions on topics such as the racial and gender wealth gaps, innovations in the asset-building field, FSS program management best practices, and financial coaching. We heard from a variety of organizations, including leaders from Abt Associates, Credit Builders Alliance, ideas42, MDRC, and Compass Working Capital. We also heard from practitioners and participants from a variety of FSS programs, including Cambridge Housing Authority (MA), Clarifi (PA), Home Forward (OR), MaineHousing, Metro Housing | Boston, Portland Housing Authority (ME), and Compass.

Materials from these sessions, including both keynotes, can be found here on FSS Link.

“The breakout sessions allowed a mixing of individuals to get a more intimate understanding of one another. It focused on lived experience. It was interactive instead of just being a lecture series and I believe we all learn better that way.”

- Lashaunda Watson, Conference Attendee and Compass FSS Client with Metro Housing | Boston
THANK YOU

Compass wishes to recognize its local housing partners as well as all of the organizations that attended or presented at this year’s conference.

Abt Associates*
Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority
Asheville Housing Authority
Attleboro Housing Authority
Baltimore Regional Housing Partnership
Bangor Housing
Berkeley Housing Authority
Bloomington Housing Authority
Boston Housing Authority^*
Bristol Housing Authority
Cambridge Housing Authority*^*
Center on Budget & Policy Priorities*
Central Falls Housing Authority
Chicago Housing Authority
Cincinnati Works
Citi Community Development
Clarifi**
Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation
CommonBond Communities Commonwealth Community Services League
Credit Builders Alliance*
Department of Housing and Urban Development*
Eden Housing
Grand Forks Housing Authority
Heartland Human Care Services
Home Forward*
Housing Authority City of Pittsburgh
Housing Authority of Baltimore City
Housing Authority of St. Mary’s County
Housing Authority of the City of Brownsville
Housing Opportunities Commission
Housing Works
ideas42*
MaineHousing*
Malden Housing Authority
Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development^*
Medford Housing Authority
Metro Housing | Boston^*
MDRC*
National Consumer Law Center*
New America*
New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority
New Ventures Maine
NYC Housing Preservation and Development
Pawtucket Housing Authority
Philadelphia Housing Authority^*
Portland Housing Authority*
Preservation of Affordable Housing^*
Rhode Island Housing
Sage Housing
Seattle Housing Authority
The Caleb Group^*
The Community Builders
University of California at Irvine Law*
Way Finders
Wichita Falls Housing Authority
Winn Companies

* Conference Speaker
^ Compass Working Capital Housing Partner
WHAT'S NEXT

KEEP THE CONVERSATIONS GOING

Let’s keep the ideas and momentum going! Connect with event attendees and our community of 600+ practitioners on FSS Link using the Discussion Board. Message fellow practitioners directly using the private message feature.

EXPLORE SESSION MATERIALS

Unable to attend all the breakout sessions? Review the presentations and materials shared at the conference, including those from the keynotes and presentation from HUD.

UPGRADE YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Sign up for a Pro or All Access FSS Link membership by December 31st and receive $200 off your annual subscription. All premium FSS Link members will receive free passes to our 2020 conference. Use the coupon code SAVE200 at checkout.

GET READY FOR 2020

We look forward to seeing you at next year’s conference! Stay tuned for more information about dates and location in early 2020. In the meantime, view the complete conference photo album here.
TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A SPECIAL OFFER!

Sign up for a Pro or All Access FSS Link membership and receive $200 off the annual price*

*offer valid through 12/31/2019