

Center for Social Development receives \$1 million Treasury grant for retirement savings research

Project to explore strategies for taxpayers to open, fund myRA accounts when filing taxes

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The U.S. Treasury Department has awarded a \$1.08 million research contract to the Center for Social Development (CSD) at Washington University in St. Louis' Brown School. One of 11 contracts awarded nationally under the Financial Empowerment Innovation Fund, this award will fund research on myRA accounts ("My Retirement Accounts").

President Barack Obama proposed the new myRA accounts in the January 2014 State of the Union address as a way of helping the millions of Americans whose employers do not offer retirement plans.

Over the next two years, the "myRA at Tax Time" project will investigate combinations of messages and interest in opening myRA accounts online at tax time to determine which is most effective and appealing to consumers. The testing will inform future development of opportunities to open myRA accounts during the tax-filing process, which would allow tax filers to divert all or part of their tax refund to that account.



Grinstein-Weiss

Intuit Inc., a partner in this research, will modify one version of its online TurboTax tax preparation software to test the consumer messaging and to test taxpayers' interest in opening myRA accounts online.

In a second component of the research, Intuit will join with the researchers in surveying a sample of Intuit's small-business customers to assess employer interest in encouraging their workers to participate in myRA accounts.

This innovative research brings together university researchers and industry leaders to find novel solutions to help lower-income Americans start their own retirement savings. About half of America's workers — and 75 percent of part-time workers — have no employer-sponsored retirement or pension plans. Finding safe, easy, effective ways to help these workers create retirement accounts has great potential for improving the long-term financial security of these households.

Michal Grinstein-Weiss (<http://brownschool.wustl.edu/Faculty/FullTime/Pages/Michal-Grinstein-Weiss.aspx>), PhD, associate director of CSD and associate professor at the Brown School, will lead the project in collaboration with David Williams, chief tax officer with Intuit Inc., and Dan Ariely, PhD, the James B. Duke Professor of Behavioral Economics at Duke University.

"The Treasury's Innovation Fund is a great step in spurring collaborative practical research that can provide evidence for public policy aimed to increase financial security for American households," Grinstein-Weiss said.

Grinstein-Weiss is a national expert in policy research related to issues of economic inequality, household financial security and social development.

About the CSD

The Center for Social Development (<http://csd.wustl.edu/Pages/default.aspx>) creates and studies innovations that enable individuals, families and communities to formulate and achieve life goals, and contribute to the economy and society. Through innovation and research, CSD makes intellectual and applied contributions in social development theory, evidence, community projects and public policy.