



# Launching an Ohio-Based America Saves Campaign

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**A**merica Saves is a nationwide campaign in which a broad coalition of nonprofit, corporate, and government groups helps individuals and families save and build wealth. Through information, advice, and encouragement, America Saves assists those who wish to pay down debt, build an emergency fund, save for a home, save for an education, or save for retirement.

America Saves is managed by the Consumer Federation of America. From its inception, the Land-Grant/Cooperative Extension System has been a strong partner of the campaign. The America Saves–Cooperative Extension Program Guide can be viewed on the Financial Security in Later Life web site at [http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/economics/fsll/edu\\_saves.html](http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/economics/fsll/edu_saves.html).

Based on the framework of America Saves, many local campaigns have been developed in Ohio, including Cleveland Saves, Columbus Saves, Hancock County Saves, and Miami Valley Saves. This fact sheet provides information for launching an Ohio-based America Saves campaign.

**WHY?** You will be able to see financial action happen: savings, debt reduction, wealth building. You will have data that are quantifiable: numbers of people participating, dollars saved or debt reduced, assets purchased, investments made, description of saving goals, and savers' choice of financial institutions.

**HOW?** Resources, orientation, and technical assistance are provided by Ohio State University Extension and the America Saves national office. You provide the local organizing that brings institutional partners together with banks and credit unions. Many of your current activities can also be leveraged to involve participants in Ohio Saves.

**WHAT WILL HAPPEN?** Results of an America Saves campaign are dynamic: new relationships (the America Saves campaign already involves more than 1,000 organizations, institutions, and companies and over 300 banks and credit unions), new opportunities for funding, increased program participation, ... and more (Schuchardt, 2005)!

## Step 1: Assess your capacity

Establishing a successful local Ohio Saves campaign requires planning and vision. You will need to gather information about your target audience, set appropriate campaign goals, and decide on the focus and campaign level that you will pursue. The campaign level you choose relates to your organizational capacity and your community's resources and needs (Kiss & DeConcini, 2002).

### Level 1

At this base level, educator responsibilities are modest. If you choose to offer a campaign at this level, you will be expected to:

### **Distribute (and talk up) the basic America Saves eight-panel brochure.**

The brochure describes the campaign, provides basic information on key savings strategies, shows how to find money to save, and explains interest compounding. It also contains an America Saves enrollment form. Distribution could be through displays, mailings, newsletters, web sites, or other organizations. Brochures are available at no charge from the America Saves national office. Contact Nancy Register at [nregister@consumerfed.org](mailto:nregister@consumerfed.org), 202-387-6121.

Table 1. Campaign levels for an Ohio-based America Saves campaign		
Campaign level	Educator responsibility	America Saves support
<b>Level 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute the basic America Saves eight-panel brochure</li> <li>• Return completed enrollment forms</li> <li>• Seek local media coverage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• America Saves brochures</li> <li>• America Saves enrollment benefits</li> <li>• America Saves database management</li> <li>• Periodic reports on the Savers in your area</li> <li>• Press packet for local media use</li> <li>• Periodic national press coverage of America Saves</li> <li>• Access to free listserve for America Saves</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Execute all Level 1 responsibilities</li> <li>• Offer, or sponsor, motivational workshops</li> <li>• Coach the Savers in your area</li> <li>• Follow-up with the Savers in your area</li> </ul>	<p>In addition to the support provided to the Level 1 option:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical assistance for setting up and maintaining the campaign including staff training, materials, consultations, and limited site visits</li> <li>• Opportunities to participate in the National Savings Forum that meets in Washington three times a year</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Execute all Level 2 responsibilities</li> <li>• Develop a partnership or coalition of community supporters</li> <li>• Offer additional services to the Savers in your area (e.g., specialized workshops and Saver’s Clubs).</li> </ul>	<p>In addition to the support provided to the Level 2 options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for Challenge Grants of \$1,000 for start-up costs</li> </ul>

**Return completed enrollment forms.**

Savers can return the completed enrollment form to you, and then you can fax or mail it to the America Saves national office. Savers can also enroll online at <http://americasaves.org/enroll/>, or mail or fax the form directly to the national office. Regardless of how the enrollment form is transmitted, the Savers will be included in the national database. You will have access to the database and will receive periodic reports on the number of Savers in your area, their savings goals, and the dollar amounts they plan to save each month.

**Seek local media coverage.**

Using the sample news releases and other information supplied periodically by the America Saves national office, seek local media coverage for the campaign.

**Level 2**

If you choose to offer a campaign at this level, your responsibilities will include all of the activities included in a Level 1 campaign. In addition, you will be expected to:

**Offer, or sponsor, motivational sessions.**

Offer 45-minute motivational workshops sessions with 15 minutes reserved for Q&A to explain basic savings strategies, and to offer membership in America Saves. At the end of the session you collect completed enrollment forms.

**Coach the Savers in your area.**

Call, or have a wealth building coach call, all those who submitted enrollment forms to

- congratulate them on joining the campaign;
- obtain verbal assurance that they want to implement a savings plan;
- help them complete the form or develop a realistic goal and/or plan if necessary;
- offer a financial education course for your Savers or refer them to counseling agencies, if needed (e.g., consumer credit counseling, homeownership counseling).

**Follow-up with the Savers in your area.**

Place a second call to each of the Savers in your area about three months after their initial enrollment to

- learn how the Saver is doing and to provide encouragement and assistance, if needed, and
- conduct a simple evaluation of “On Track,” “Trying,” or “Not Implementing.” This evaluation information needs to be transmitted to the America Saves national office for inclusion in the saver database. It will also be used for annual evaluations.

**Level 3**

If you choose to offer a campaign at this level, your responsibilities will include all of the activities included in a Level 2 campaign. In addition, you will be expected to:

**Develop a partnership or coalition of community supporters.**

Organize a group of local supporters/partners to help publicize the campaign, distribute brochures, sponsor workshops, seek local funding, organize savings clubs, etc.

**Apply for a Challenge Grant for start-up costs.**

Obtain money for campaign start-up costs by applying for a Challenge Grant from America Saves.

**Offer additional services to the Savers in your area.**

Though optional, you may want to consider

- offering workshops on more specialized topics such as debt management, retirement savings, retirement planning, homeownership, etc.;
- getting supporter/partners to sponsor savings clubs containing several Savers who meet periodically, usu-

ally monthly, to discuss financial issues and, if they desire, hear from experts.

The America Saves National Office will provide many services to you. Eligibility for some of the services depends on the campaign option you choose to offer.

*Source: Kiss & DeConcini, 2002.*

**Step 2: Research your target population**

It is important to identify your target population before you start an Ohio Saves campaign.

Gathering demographic information from other America Saves campaigns will help you decide which population group you want to target with your campaign.

Table 2 shows that the typical America Saves participant is a woman between 35 and 55 years old, married, with a college education. She lives in a household of three, is employed full-time, and has an annual household income in the range of \$20,000 to \$40,000.

Variable	Items	Columbus Saves	Cleveland Saves	America Saves <sup>1</sup>
Gender	Women	75%	73%	77.4%
	Men	25%	26%	20.9%
Age	0–34 years	26.6%	24%	31.3%
	35–54 years	59.3%	59%	52.6%
	55 and older	14.1%	17%	11.3%
Race	White	59.5%	40%	30.4%
	Black	35.4%	53%	61.7%
Marital status	Married/living with partner	60.9%	no information	no information
	Divorced	14.5%	no information	no information
	Single or never married	21.2%	no information	no information
	Average family size	2.8	3	2.74
Education	Less than high school	2.8%	6%	3.9%
	High school	9.0%	23%	21.7%
	Some college	24.7%	28%	35.2%
	Trade/technical school degree	7.3%	no information	no information
	College degree	55.9%	42%	30.4%
Annual household income <sup>2</sup>	Less than \$20,000	14.9%	13%	16.5%
	\$20,000–\$40,000	27.0%	23%	21.3%
	\$40,000–\$60,000	20.1%	22%	19.1%
	\$60,000–\$80,000	16.1%	16%	12.2%
	\$80,000 and higher	21.8%	26%	16.5%
Employment	Full-time	76.0%	no information	no information
	Part-time	13.4%	no information	no information
	Number of interviewees	179	300	230
	Year of survey	2006	2005	2004

<sup>1</sup>The survey interviewed participants of Cleveland Saves, Black America Saves, Charlotte Saves, Indianapolis Saves, Milwaukee Saves, and Philadelphia Saves. Sources: Clarke, 2004; Loibl & Scharff, 2006; Cude & Cai, 2005.

<sup>2</sup>Income group definitions varied slightly for each of the three surveys.

### Step 3: Develop partnerships

Level 2 and Level 3 campaigns enlist the help of partners to accomplish the campaign goals. America Saves campaigns are based on partnerships with

- **financial institutions** to provide low-cost savings accounts to participants and
- **local institutions** where your target audience meets and works to set up America Saves sites.

#### Financial institutions

The main draw for financial institutions to join an Ohio Saves campaign is to fulfill obligations imposed by the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA). Tips to get in touch with financial institutions in your community include:

- Start with financial institutions that are already involved in an Ohio-based America Saves campaign. Financial institutions often have to make changes to their business policies to accommodate America Saves accounts. It is easier when they can copy procedures from bank branches that are already involved with America Saves.
  - Key financial institutions involved in Cleveland Saves** are Dollar Bank, Key Bank, National City Bank, Ohio Savings Bank, and Faith United Community Credit Union among 19 banking partners.
  - Key financial institutions involved in Columbus Saves** are Fifth Third Bank, Chase Bank, Huntington Bank, National City Bank, CME Federal Credit Union among 30 banking partners.
  - Key financial institutions involved in Hancock County Saves** are Millstream Area Credit Union, Sky Bank, Citizens National Bank, Home Savings & Loan, Fifth Third Bank among others.
- When approaching financial institutions, try to contact the “CRA Officer.” This person will be most interested in working with you.

- Savers with “ChexSystems” flags on their personal information will not be able to open an account because of a history of account mishandling. Work with the “Get Checking” program to have the report deleted.

#### Local institutions to set up America Saves sites

Your local community will be interested in joining your campaign for two reasons. First, increasing savings is an important goal in our society. Second, joining an America Saves campaign means joining a high-profile national movement. Three tips when reaching out to community organizations include:

- Highlight the “campaign feeling,” which can provide an opportunity for spontaneity and action
- Stress the statewide and national scope of the campaign and the resources provided by the America Saves national office
- Recruit the middle management of your community organizations for your hands-on campaign working group and try to win the upper management for your advisory board

Source: Loibl, Shockey, & Renn, 2006.

### Step 4: Market your Ohio Saves campaign

While the need for saving is clear, it may not always be easy to recruit campaign participants. Some people are not sure that they will achieve a savings goal, others are embarrassed to admit that they need it, and many people are in denial and don’t want to address their financial situation.

As shown in table 3, most people are motivated to join an America Saves campaign for a number of reasons.

With this information in mind, you will want to develop a marketing goal to help focus your efforts. The goal should be specific, measurable, and time sensitive. For example, the goal of a marketing campaign might be to enroll 100 Savers over the year.

		<b>Columbus Saves</b>	<b>America Saves*</b>	<b>Cleveland Saves</b>
Major savings goals	Emergency fund	33.9%	36.9%	29.1%
	Retirement/investment	19.2%	11.3%	19.8%
	Debt reduction	6.2%	18.7%	24.3%
	Home ownership/improvement	5.6%	16.9%	14.3%
	Education	2.8%	no information	3.3%
	Starting a business	2.8%	no information	1.0%
	Buying a car	1.7%	no information	1.8%
	Number of interviewees	179	230	7,815
	Year of survey	2006	2004	2006

\* The survey interviewed participants of Cleveland Saves, Black America Saves, Charlotte Saves, Indianapolis Saves, Milwaukee Saves, and Philadelphia Saves. Sources: Clarke, 2004; Loibl & Scharff, 2006; Hilton & Devall, 1997.

The following are some of the tools you can consider:

- Establish a series of campaign events during America Saves Week in February. Refer to the America Saves Week guide for ideas (Schuchardt 2005).
- Recruit corporate partners to co-sponsor the campaign and provide locations for campaign sites.
- Initiate a group of wealth coaches to help you with the three-month follow-up call and help spread the word about the campaign.
- Take advantage of the web site created for your campaign from the America Saves national office. It provides more in-depth information and helps direct individuals to action.
- Recruit media partners—one radio station, one TV station—to help promote events and raise awareness for your campaign goal.
- Create and send out “publicity kits” to local media, businesses, and other organizations.

Source: Murrell, 2005.

### Step 5: Implement your Ohio Saves campaign

Once you have assessed your capacity, your target audience, and the resources available in your community, you can determine which campaign level is best for your community and develop campaign goals and objectives.

It may be most prudent to begin your effort at the simplest level (Level 1) by distributing the basic America Saves brochure to potential Savers. While you are providing information and referrals, you may begin generating resources and building capacity to launch a Level 2 campaign.

On the other hand, if you possess the resources and support at the outset, you may want to move right away into a Level 2 campaign or even the full-scale Level 3 campaign.

Whatever you decide to do, remember that it is a growth process. It is always possible to expand your level of involvement over time.

### Step 6: Evaluate your Ohio Saves campaign

Setting goals for community campaigns is necessary to ensure continued growth. Setting realistic goals, developing strategies to achieve these goals, and tracking progress throughout the year will help keep the volunteers and staff motivated and focused.

The following goals and accompanying questions will prompt strategic thinking by both the campaign coordinator and working group. We recommend that you utilize at least one meeting early in the New Year to develop these goals and strategies. The national and Ohio-based America Saves teams will be happy to work with individual campaigns as you plan your campaign events.

#### 1. Savers

- Number of workshops held \_\_\_\_\_
- Workshop attendance \_\_\_\_\_
- New Savers enrolled \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of new Saves sites \_\_\_\_\_

How will potential Ohio Saves sites be identified and recruited?

How will the campaign communicate with enrolled Savers?

What services are available to enrolled Savers (i.e., Saver clubs, events, local newsletters, etc.)?

#### 2. Marketing

- Requests for information on America Saves as a result of marketing \_\_\_\_\_
- Newly enrolled Savers as a result of marketing efforts \_\_\_\_\_

Campaign level	Timeline to prepare a campaign	Campaign activities
Level 1	2 weeks	Order America Saves brochures
		Enroll new Savers at your workshops
Level 2	2 months	Collaborate with one or two financial institutions and community partners
		Enlist the help of wealth coaches
		Organize follow-up with Savers
Level 3	2 years	Develop and maintain a community-wide network of collaborators
		Apply for grant funding to support campaign
		Develop additional service for Savers

Sources: Murrell, 2005; Barany, 2006.

List ideas for possible social marketing strategies (i.e., radio PSAs, etc.).

List ideas for possible saver recruitment events (i.e., Roll Your Change Week).

### 3. Volunteer goals

- Number of wealth coaches trained \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of motivational speakers trained \_\_\_\_\_

Outline your strategy for recruiting, training, and retaining wealth coaches and motivational speakers.

### 4. Coordinating committee goals

- Frequency of coordinating committee meetings to be held next year: \_\_\_\_\_
- Number of people in attendance at each coordinating committee meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Outline your strategy for keeping coordinating committee members engaged and excited about America Saves throughout the coming year.

### 5. Fundraising

- Fundraising goal \_\_\_\_\_
- Annual budget \_\_\_\_\_

Outline your fundraising plan.

Appoint one or two members of the working group to develop grant proposals.

### 6. Community impact

- Total dollars saved \_\_\_\_\_
- Dollars saved by savings goal \_\_\_\_\_

What impact has the campaign had on partnering institutions?

How have organizations “embedded” the campaign into their “corporate structure”?

What other information illustrates the campaign’s economic impact on the community?

How aware are local media and local elected officials of the campaign?

Source: Barany, 2006.

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