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EXECUTIVE BRIEF

PROTECTING WHAT MATTERS

Landscape Analysis of Asset Protection and Legacy Planning in Community Development Credit Unions

Executive Summary

Community Development Credit Unions (CDCUs) have spent decades expanding access to affordable financial services and helping low- and moderate-income (LMI) households build assets through homeownership, entrepreneurship, and savings. But financial stability and asset building are only half of financial security — families must also be able to protect and preserve those assets against illness, fraud and scams, disability, natural disaster, or the absence of legacy planning.

CDCUs are well positioned to respond. Their trusted relationships, financial education and coaching, affordable products, and community partnerships, enable them to support members throughout their financial lives. As the movement continues to mature, an important question emerges:

HOW DO WE HELP FAMILIES PROTECT THE FINANCIAL PROGRESS THEY HAVE WORKED SO HARD TO ACHIEVE?

To establish a baseline understanding, Inclusiv conducted a landscape analysis combining an environmental scan of member websites with surveys, needs assessments, focus groups, and interviews across its CDCU network.

The analysis revealed that CDCUs overwhelmingly see asset protection and legacy planning as a mission-aligned priority, but current efforts are informal, fragmented, and not integrated into the member's experience. Organizational capacity — not institutional commitment — is the primary barrier, and there is a significant opportunity to move toward an intentional and coordinated approach that integrates asset protection and legacy planning throughout the full member journey.

This brief summarizes the landscape analysis and its recommendations, which represent the first phase of Inclusiv's effort to strengthen asset protection and legacy planning across the CDCU movement. Findings from the analysis will inform the resources and implementation strategies Inclusiv develop to help CDCUs support members in building, protecting, preserving, and transferring assets.

Beyond Building Wealth

The Financial Health Network defines financial health as a household's ability to make ends meet and stay on track through financial setbacks — a framing that assesses household financial health across the dimensions of spending, saving, borrowing, planning, and protecting---making clear that financial inclusion must move beyond access and asset accumulation and move towards resilience and long-term security. Emerging demographic trends make this work more urgent than ever.

The U.S. is entering into what is known as the Great Wealth Transfer, with an estimated $124 trillion expected to move between generations over the next two decades. For LMI households, wealth is often a paid-off home, a modest retirement account, a family business, or life insurance — assets that remain vulnerable without protection and can force the next generation to start over if lost.

51%

of adults 50+ have a will, though 93% consider one important

1 in 4

Americans (24%) have been personally scammed as an adult

31%

of U.S. households are considered "Financially Healthy"

A stark income gap also shows up in basic legacy planning: only **33%** of households earning under $25,000 a year report having a will, compared with **66%** of households earning over $1 million — and lower-income respondents are more likely to postpone estate planning until later in life.

If financial inclusion is intended to improve household financial health, then asset protection and legacy planning represent the next evolution of financial inclusion; therefore, inclusion strategies must help members not only access safe financial products and build assets.

For CDCUs, this creates an opportunity to extend existing strengths in savings, credit-building, homeownership, entrepreneurship, retirement savings, and financial coaching into a more complete financial health strategy. Asset protection and legacy planning can help members move from participation in the financial system to durable resilience, ownership, and long-term economic mobility

About the Analysis

As CDCUs continues expanding opportunities for financial inclusion and asset building, less is understood about how they currently support members in protecting assets, planning for major life transitions, and preserving financial progress across generations. Inclusiv used a mixed-method approach to establish a baseline: a national context review, an environmental scan of 100-member credit union websites, a needs assessment survey, focus groups, and key informant interviews with CDCU leaders and practitioners. The goal was not to evaluate individual institutions, but to identify field-level patterns, capacity needs, and opportunities for future resource development.

Key Findings

Services Exist but Remain Fragmented

Inclusiv's environmental scan found 80% of CDCUs offer common asset-building products (e.g., IRAs), but only 18% offer asset protection products such as life, disability, or long-term care insurance. Fewer than half of those also offer legacy and transfer services, and where they exist, support is delivered mainly through external referrals rather than in-house offerings.

Organizational Capacity, Not Institutional Commitment, Is the Primary Barrier

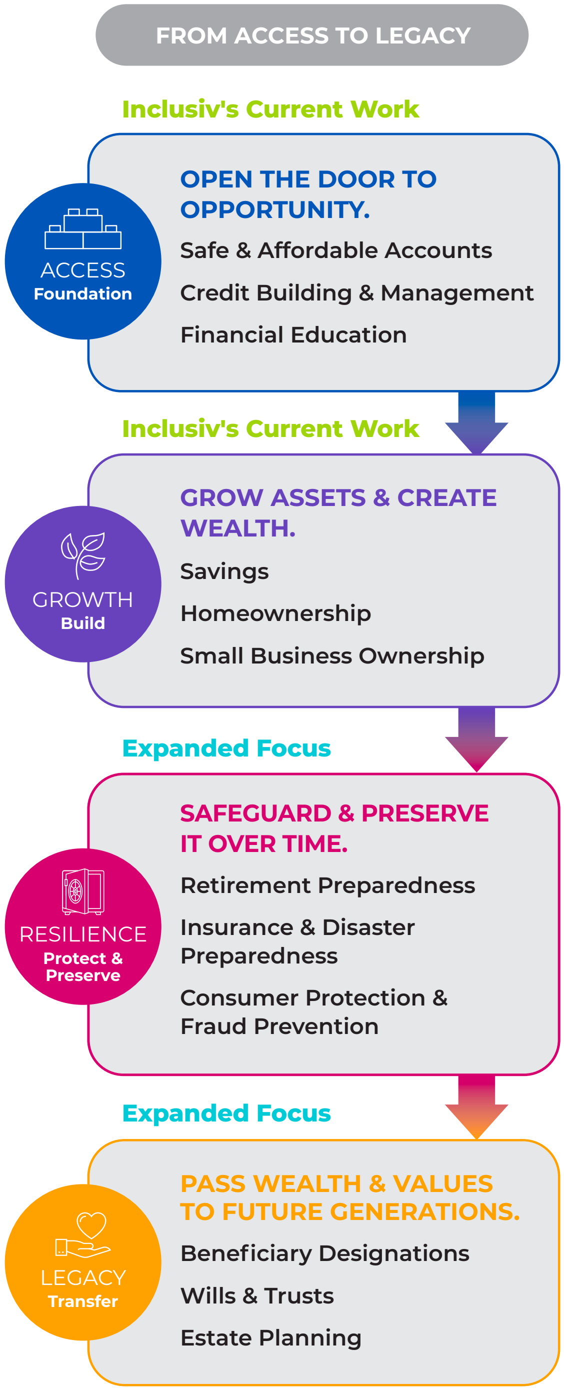
Mission commitment is not the constraint—capacity is. All survey respondents (100%) cited staffing constraints, limited staff product knowledge, and a lack of trusted referral partners as the primary obstacles, and all called for staff training, member-facing tools, and technology support. Without these investments, asset protection is treated more like a community service than a core part of the member experience.

The Need to Move Beyond Isolated Offerings

Few CDCUs offer asset protection services — beneficiary assistance, fraud and scam prevention education, insurance, referrals — as integrated components of a member's financial journey. 66% of respondents cited limited technical expertise and uncertainty about where to begin. As one focus group participant puts it, staff need to learn to "see openings in natural conversations" rather than treat protection as a separate service.

Building the Foundation by Expanding the Financial Inclusion Journey

Expanding asset protection and legacy planning will require more than adding products or services — CDCUs need stronger institutional capacity, including staff training and practical member-facing resources, to integrate these conversations into the member experience. The recommendations below draw on guidance from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, NeighborWorks America, FDIC Money Smart, Prosperity Now, The Center for NYC Neighborhoods, and Inclusiv's own CDCU members



Recommendations and Actions

Build Staff Capability

Incorporate asset protection into existing employee education with role-specific training — conversation guides, referral protocols, and real-world scenarios. Inclusiv's Learning Center has an opportunity to expand its curriculum to include a comprehensive set of asset protection and legacy planning topics.

Integrate Asset Protection and Legacy Planning into Member Education

Embed asset protection throughout the member journey — not as a stand-alone service reserved for older or higher-income members — covering emergency savings, insurance, fraud and scam prevention, beneficiary designations, and estate planning. Inclusiv's Learning Center plans to develop a suite of member-facing materials, coaching guides, and digital modules to support this.

Expand Trusted Partnerships

Most protection needs exceed any single institution's expertise. Inclusiv plans to create a pathway connecting CDCUs with vetted industry experts to strengthen referral standards and cultivate partnerships that expand access to trusted expertise.

Create Scalable Shared Resources

A common set of adaptable implementation resources — training, toolkits, referral resources, best practices — reduces the burden on CDCUs. Inclusiv's cross-sector Advisory Group and its Emerging Practice Peer Support Group can guide this development and support ongoing pilot testing, peer learning, and regular updates.

Conclusion

The landscape analysis affirms that financial inclusion must extend beyond access and asset accumulation. For LMI households, long-term security depends on protecting, preserving, and transferring assets across life events and generations. CDCUs are well positioned to lead this work, but current efforts are fragmented, and organizational capacity — not mission alignment — is the central barrier.

CDCUs do not need to become legal, insurance, or estate-planning providers. Their role is to help members understand why protection matters, recognize the moments when guidance is needed, and connect them to trusted resources. The path forward: build staff capability, strengthen member education, expand trusted partnerships, and create shared resources — so that financial progress is not only achieved, but sustained and passed forward.

The full landscape analysis report can be found at **inclusiv.org/protecting-what-matters**