A Pulse on Wealth-Building Solutions in New England from 2020–2025:

Trends, Gaps, and Opportunities to Drive Impact

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Dalberg

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Insights and Opportunities

Millions of Americans are grappling with an economic crisis, driven by the high cost of living and the lack of affordable housing. Climate disruptions and the effects of AI on jobs have further aggravated these pressures. To meet these challenges, a number of players in New England have launched initiatives aimed at making households financially resilient and expanding their access to wealth-building opportunities.

Dalberg Advisors conducted a pulse of programmes begun in 2020 to understand the evolving landscape of wealth-building solutions and highlight opportunities and potential gaps. The pulse is designed for policymakers, nonprofits and philanthropic and public funders looking to guide investment to underinvested areas.

Key Findings from a PEST Analysis

These trends capture the forces influencing household financial behavior, institutional strategies, opportunities for interventions and the limitations of current programmes.

- **Political:** Increases in minimum wages, expanded tax credits, and major housing and retirement-savings investments are boosting incomes and assets. However, new federal cuts to Medicaid and SNAP threaten to reverse recent gains for vulnerable households.
- **Economic:** Housing shortages and high prices are delaying homeownership, while inflation and high consumer debt constrain savings. Furthermore, climate events and AI-driven automation threaten income stability and asset durability.
- **Social:** Aging populations, growing demographic diversity, and the rising number of multigenerational households are reshaping wealth-building behaviors. Another trend is that of younger generations turning to social media for financial guidance.
- **Technological:** Mobile-first financial infrastructure, AI-driven tools, and expanded broadband access are improving access to financial services. However, the threat of cyber fraud calls for robust consumer protection.

Insights from the Field

1. **The public sector leads in wealth-building:** Public entities, largely at the state level, launched 37% of all new initiatives in this study since 2020, with a focus on asset-building and liability reduction. States offer Baby Bonds, Children's Savings Accounts, guaranteed income programs, homeownership support, and auto-IRA programs. Yet two-thirds of public initiatives remain small pilots constrained by limited funding and inconsistent implementation.
2. **Asset-building dominates, while wealth preservation is underdeveloped:** Fifty-two percent of initiatives in this study help households acquire assets, primarily via financial coaching, homeownership assistance, and small business support. On the other hand, only 10% focus on sustaining those gains. Gaps in post-purchase counseling, insurance, estate planning, and credit repair expose families to preventable losses.
3. **Homeownership and small business development make up 37% of new initiatives in this research:** Homeownership remains the most common route to building wealth despite severe regional supply shortages. Small business initiatives emphasize technical assistance and coaching, reflecting the demand for support beyond capital. And states have their own initiatives aimed at making families financially literate and better able to build wealth.

Takeaways for Funders and Policymakers

1. **Invest in scaling high-potential solutions:** Many promising models remain pilots; funders can help build the infrastructure, learning agendas, and partnerships required for broader adoption.
2. **Strengthen wealth-sustaining supports:** Funders and policymakers should expand investment in post-purchase counseling, insurance access, legal and estate planning services, and integrated financial resilience supports to ensure households keep and grow their wealth.
3. **Reinforce connections across the ecosystem:** Funders can bring together actors working across housing, health and financial services, ensuring solutions that are responsive to interconnected challenges.

Conclusion

Homeownership and small business development remain important pathways to building wealth, but they are increasingly strained by rising costs, economic uncertainty, climate risks and rapid technological change. Meanwhile, aging populations and growing cultural diversity are influencing the financial decisions of families, and younger generations are seeking financial advice from online sources.

This complex web of challenges calls for a multi-pronged approach that encapsulates tech solutions, addresses supply shortages and designs initiatives that are resilient to economic vicissitudes and climate shocks. It's also crucial to support households in sustaining and protecting their wealth.

By scaling effective models and strengthening cross-sector connections, New England can move toward a more resilient and equitable financial future.

Introduction

1

In the last five years, a diverse range of actors across New England has launched initiatives to strengthen household financial resilience and expand access to wealth-building opportunities.

To better understand this evolving landscape, Dalberg Advisors conducted a pulse of wealth-building solutions introduced in New England since 2020, exploring emerging patterns, trends, and questions about the actors and interventions shaping the ways in which households build and sustain wealth today. This pulse comes as wealth-building solutions face pressure to meet the challenges of affordability crises, climate disruptions, and AI-driven change – raising questions about what wealth building for New England households will look like in the next decade and whether traditional, core wealth-building supports will be sufficient to meet the moment.

Purpose of this pulse: To map the current wealth-building solutions landscape across New England and more broadly to explore the application of large-scale market mapping to surface actionable opportunity spaces, potential redundancies, and areas for alignment across the ecosystem.

Audience: Funders, policymakers, practitioners, and ecosystem leaders interested in impactful or scalable wealth-building solutions. The pulse is especially relevant for philanthropic and public[1] funders seeking to identify underinvested areas and guide coordinated investment strategies, nonprofit leaders aiming to understand their positioning within the broader ecosystem and explore opportunities for collaboration or differentiation, and financial intermediaries refining how and where capital is deployed.

Methodology: This pulse involved multiple research streams: a landscape scan of wealth-building solutions; a Political, Economic, Social, and Technological (PEST) analysis; reviews of publicly available Community Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting notes; desk research; and select expert interviews. The research and analysis leveraged AI-first methodologies to accelerate discovery, ensure consistency, and surface trends from diverse, publicly available sources.

Key terminology: This analysis has defined a wealth-building solution as any program, service, or policy intervention that helps individuals or households improve their long-term financial position. These solutions must have a clear, tangible effect on a person's ability to move from financial precarity toward financial security and autonomy. A wealth-building solution should fit under at least one wealth-building strategy:

- Decrease Liabilities: Initiatives that reduce long-term financial burdens that limit a person's ability to build wealth[2]
- Increase Assets: Initiatives that help people acquire income-generating or equity-based assets[3]
- Sustain Wealth: Initiatives that involve protecting assets over time[4]
- Empower Wealth-Building: Initiatives that equip people with the knowledge, tools, and networks needed to build wealth[5]

The following sections highlight the top trends and insights from the pulse.

1 Includes City, State, and Federal funders.
2 Key words include: "Debt reduction", "credit repair", "debt counseling", "rent relief", "housing stabilization", "eviction prevention", "emergency cash assistance", "crisis fund", "financial emergency support", "payday loan alternative", "utility assistance", "medical debt forgiveness", "bankruptcy prevention", "legal financial assistance"
3 Key words include: "Down payment assistance", "homebuyer education", "mortgage support", "small business grant", "microenterprise", "matched savings", "individual development account (IDA)", "financial asset building", "baby bonds", "intergenerational wealth transfer", "cooperative ownership", "real estate investment cooperative"
4 Key words include: "Wealth preservation", "asset protection", "estate planning", "heirs' property", "title clearing", "legacy planning", "life insurance", "homeowners insurance", "risk mitigation", "trust administration", "financial planning for families", "succession planning", "generational wealth transfer", "will preparation", "asset retention strategy", "home ownership repairs"
5 Key words include: "Financial literacy", "wealth literacy", "money management education", "credit building", "budgeting workshop", "retirement planning", "culturally relevant financial coaching", "community financial education", "narrative change on wealth building", "pre-purchase counseling", "post-purchase counseling", "credit score monitoring", "credit score improvement"

Trends shaping the future of wealth building: Context and insight from the PEST analysis

2

As the wealth-building ecosystem evolves, external forces – political, economic, social, and technological – are reshaping household financial behaviors, institutional strategies, and the opportunities (or limitations) of intervention. These trends point to where needs are emerging as well as where the field may be headed, raising important questions about whether current wealth-building strategies are evolving quickly enough to remain effective. The following PEST insights are designed to complement the landscape scan by providing foresight into market-shaping dynamics and uncovering early signals, emerging risks, and areas of intervention.

A note on methodology: This PEST analysis used an AI-first approach to accelerate signal detection and ensure consistency across diverse sources. AI prompts generated 20+ trends per category, which were then scored on six dimensions:

i. **Credibility:** The trend is supported by at least two reputable sources (e.g., Brookings, Federal Reserve (national or regional), State Treasuries, CDFIs (e.g., OFN, LISC), Urban Institute, Pew, Aspen Institute, Economist, Financial Times, Forbes, official government agencies, etc.).
ii. **Relevance to the Wealth Building Ecosystem:** The trend affects wealth building defined as the process through which individuals, families, or communities accumulate and sustain financial assets and economic resources over time to increase their long-term financial security, stability, and generational prosperity.
iii. **Certainty:** The trend shows signs of persistence or momentum (e.g., funding activity, policy movement, adoption indicators) and will likely still be relevant in the next 5-10 years.
iv. **Geographic scope:** The trend affects three or more New England states, or is a national trend with visible influence in the region.
v. **Recency:** The trend is backed by 2025 sources (with 2024 sources used only to corroborate).
vi. **Magnitude of impact:** The trend must have potential to drive significant, structural change in the financial resilience or wealth-building outcomes of households or communities such as by altering access, scale, affordability, or long-term stability of key economic levers (e.g., housing, credit, income, ownership). Marginal or incremental shifts did not qualify.

Figure 1: PEST Alanysis Overview

POLITICAL

- Minimum wages and expanded tax credits
- Housing investments for affordable housing
- Safety net rollbacks
- Auto-IRA initiatives

ECONOMIC

- Housing affordability and supply constraints
- Costs, debt, income gaps
- Climate change and automation
- Entrepreneurship & market volatility

SOCIAL

- Aging population
- Changing population dynamics
- Multi-generational living
- Social media and peer-to-peer payment interactions

TECHNOLOGY

- Mobile-first, real time, open financial infrastructure
- Artificial Intelligence
- Digital access and remote work
- Cybersecurity and fraud prevention

The following selection of trends represents a synthesis of the highest scoring signals:

Political:[6]

1. **Increases in minimum wages and expanded tax credits across New England are set to boost incomes for lower-wage households.**
   As of January 2025, Connecticut's minimum wage reached $16.35 (up 4.2%), benefiting around ~170,000 workers. Massachusetts and Rhode Island now stand at $15.00, with Maine and Vermont at $14.65 and $14.01 respectively, and New Hampshire still at $7.25.[7] Massachusetts also increased its Earned Income Tax Credit from 30% to 40% of the federal amount and introduced a $440 refundable Child and Family Tax Credit per dependent.[8]

2. **State-backed housing investments are directly trying to expand housing supply across New England for both renters and homeowners.**
   Massachusetts passed a $5.16 billion housing bond to expand zoning for new development, modernize public housing, support first-time homebuyers, incentivize affordable housing construction, convert vacant commercial space to residential spaces, and invest in sustainable, green housing initiatives.[9]

3. **Safety net gains are at risk due to federal rollbacks** .
   Medicaid expansion has reduced new medical debt by 30-45% in participating states, directly protecting low-income families from financial shocks.[10] However, in July 2025, Congress passed deep federal safety-net cuts, up to $1.02 trillion from Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)[11] and $230 billion from SNAP over the next decade,[12] which threaten to reduce support for low-income and rural households and could significantly increase poverty and financial precarity. Without coordinated federal and state action, these advances in financial inclusion and safety net protection remain vulnerable.

4. **State-implemented auto-IRA initiatives in New England are poised to boost savings and asset growth.**[13]
   Since launching in March 2022, these initiatives have enrolled approximately 30,000 savers, accumulated over $33 million in assets, and engaged more than 6,600 employers and 20,000 active accounts.[14] By leveraging auto-enrollment, online platforms, and payroll integration, these programs provide low-friction access to retirement savings for workers historically excluded from employer plans, including underserved and non-traditional workers.

6 Additional trends that met all but one inclusion criteria: Equity in Federal Investments, Inclusive Credit Reforms, Regional Collaboration, and Supporting Minority Businesses
7 Minimum Wage Will Increase 4.2% in 2025, CBIA, 2024
8 Tax Credits to Help Put Money in Your Pocket, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2024
9 Governor Maura Healey Signs Most Ambitious Legislation to Address Housing Costs in State History, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2024
10 MEDICAID AND FINANCIAL HEALTH, National Bureau of Economic Research, 2017
11 The Truth About the One Big Beautiful Bill Act's Cuts to Medicaid and Medicare, The Center for American Progress, 2025
12 How Trump's tax cut and spending megabill would impact SNAP recipients, ABC News, 2025
13 More States Are Planning for the Coming Retirement Surge, Pew Research Institute, 2024
14 MyCTSavings, Connecticut Retirement Security Program, n.d.

Economic:[15]

1. **Housing affordability and supply constraints are reshaping pathways to homeownership in New England.**
   Despite record-high building permit activity, demand has continued to outpace supply, keeping vacancy rates at historic lows and driving median single-family prices roughly 50% higher since early 2020; this elevated trajectory is expected to persist through 2025.[16] Meanwhile many Millennials and members of Gen Z are delaying homeownership into their thirties or foregoing it altogether due to high prices, later marriage, student debt, and the broader shift toward long-term renting, co buying, condo living, and aging in place by older homeowners.[17] Without significant expansion in both owner-occupied and rental housing supply, these trends are likely to reinforce economic inequality and prompt more households to consider alternative wealth-building strategies or relocation to lower-cost markets.

2. **Rising costs, debt, and income gaps are hindering future wealth-building.**
   As of 2025, regional inflation reached roughly 4% year-over-year, driven largely by shelter and medical-care expenses.[18] At the same time, households are carrying elevated debt: average credit card balances in the region stand at approximately $6,592 per cardholder, slightly above the national average.[19] As a result, lower- and middle-income families bear heavier debt-service burdens. This limits their capacity to save, build assets, and absorb financial shocks.

3. **Climate change and automation are reshaping New England's economic risks**.
   Extreme weather, such as Vermont's 2023 floods which inflicted up to $2.2 billion in damage across the region and disrupted hundreds of businesses, prompted insurer pullbacks and skyrocketing premiums in high-risk areas.[20] Meanwhile, automation and AI could automate over 50% of tasks in roles like market research and sales, potentially impacting up to 50 million U.S. jobs in the coming years and narrowing entry-level career pathways.[21]

4. **Entrepreneurship is growing, but rising market volatility is increasing financial risk.**
   Since the pandemic, entrepreneurial activity has surged: national data shows more than 18 million new business applications since January 2021,[22] and New England state-level initiatives, from university innovation hubs to SBA-backed regional cluster grants, have bolstered small business and startup ecosystems.[23] Small business ownership is strongly associated with wealth accumulation. Households with business assets have a median net worth between 2 to 7 times higher than those without.[24] However, unpredictable market swings[25] and persistent challenges in accessing startup capital (especially for small businesses)[26] have increased financial uncertainty for entrepreneurs and new business owners.

15 Surfaced economic trends that met all but one inclusion criteria: Cautious Consumer Confidence, Green Energy Economic Boom, and Gig and Freelance Economy Growth,
16 New England's Housing Markets: Supply and Demand Factors Affecting Housing Prices across the Region, Federal Reserve of Boston, 2025
17 How Student Debt Is Locking Millennials and Gen Z Out of Homeownership, The Kaplan Group, 2025
18 New England Economic Conditions Through March 4, 2025, Federal Reserve of Boston, 2025
19 Average Credit Card Debt, WalletHub, 2025
20 The Truth About Climate Change and Home Insurance, Conservation Law Foundation, 2025
21 How AI is reshaping the career ladder, and other trends in jobs and skills on Labour Day, World Economic Forum, 2025
22 New Business Applications Surge Across the Country, US Chamber of Commerce, 2024
23 MIT to lead expansion of regional innovation network, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2024
24 Changes in U.S. Family Finances from 2019 to 2022, Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, 2023
25 CBOE Volatility Index, Federal Reserve Bank of ST Louis, n.d.
26 Small Businesses Face Challenges Accessing Capital, Uncertainty Around Tax and Trade Policy, Goldman Sachs, 2025

Social:[27]

1. **The aging population is transforming household dynamics.**
New England's population is aging, led by Maine, the oldest state in the U.S. with other northern New England states like Vermont and New Hampshire close behind,[28] shifting household roles and financial pressures.[29] In some rural counties, adults over 55 now make up more than 20% of the labor force.[30] As more working-age residents support aging relatives and seniors depend on fixed incomes, families face rising caregiving costs and reduced savings capacity. Addressing this trend will require stronger caregiving support, financial protection, and tools to enable intergenerational wealth transfer.

2. **Changing population dynamics will reshape the need for wealth-building solutions.**
Driven by immigration and second-generation families, New England's growing diversity is reshaping its workforce and financial systems. In Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, over 90% of recent population growth stems from foreign-born residents and their children, with urban centers seeing rapid increases in Latino, Asian, Black, and other non-white populations.[31] This shift is expanding demand for culturally relevant financial services. But without inclusive education, banking, and outreach, diverse communities risk being excluded from future economic gains.

3. **Economic pressures and cultural values are driving a sustained increase in multigenerational living.**
As housing costs rise and caregiving needs intensify, more New England families are turning to multigenerational living as a practical financial strategy. Nationally, the share of Americans in multigenerational households has more than doubled from 7% in 1971 to 18% in 2021, according to Pew Research Center.[32] This shift is visible in the region as well: between 2010 and 2020, 76% of towns in Connecticut reported increases in multigenerational housing, with growing demand for adaptable home layouts and co-living arrangements.[33] Looking ahead, if multigenerational living becomes the norm, it offers a powerful mechanism to pool resources, share caregiving, and accelerate savings, but only if families have access to supportive financial planning.

4. **Younger generations are increasingly leveraging social media platforms for financial advice and peer-to-peer payment interactions.**
Gallup finds 42% of Americans under 30 now get financial advice from social media compared to just 27% using financial advisors.[34] Meanwhile, peer-to-peer payment usage surged from 12% in 2017 to 50% in 2023, with digital wallet use growing 32% in 2023 alone as 86% of businesses and 74% of consumers adopted faster payment services.[35]

27 Surfaced social trends that met all but one inclusion criteria: Delayed Family Formation, Changing Gender Dynamics in Finance, Peer Influence and Financial Behavior, and Digital Life and Social Connectivity
28 New Hampshire Policy Points 2025: Population and Demographics, Fiscal Policy Institute, 2025
29 Maine, Data Commons, n.d.
30 Rural America at a Glance, USDA Economic Research Service, 2024
31 New England Is Gaining Population Due to Immigration, University of New Hampshire, 2024
32 The demographics of multigenerational households, Pew Research Center, 2022
33 Multigenerational Households in Connecticut, CT Data Collaborative, 2023
34 Americans Still Turn to People for Financial Advice, Gallup, 2025
35 Federal Reserve surveys: U.S. businesses, consumers increasingly adopt faster and instant payment services, The Federal Reserve, 2024

Technological:[36]

1. **Shift to mobile-first, real-time, and open financial infrastructure.**
The U.S. financial system is transitioning from traditional banking methods to mobile-first platforms, real-time payment systems, and standardized data-sharing protocols. As of April 2025, over 1,300 financial institutions across all 50 states have joined the FedNow network, facilitating instant payments, and 48% of U.S. banked households now use mobile as their primary method of account access.[37] Additionally, new regulation is being considered to provide consumers with access to their financial data, thereby promoting competition and consumer empowerment.[38] These developments are crucial for ensuring that digital financial services are accessible and beneficial to all, particularly underserved communities.

2. **Projected increase of AI for personal finance.**
AI-powered tools like robo-advisors and budgeting apps are enabling users to manage their finances directly.[39] Apps like Cleo[40] and PocketGuard[41] use conversational AI to automate savings, track spending, and build credit, while robo-advisors like Betterment[42] offer low-cost, automated investing. Collectively, these innovations could lower barriers to entry, personalize advice at scale, and increase access to potential wealth-building tools. However, concerns about data privacy and algorithmic bias persist, necessitating robust regulatory frameworks.

3. **Expansion of digital access and opportunities for remote work.**
Efforts to expand digital access in New England are progressing, with New Hampshire allocating approximately $196.5 million,[43] Massachusetts $147 million,[44] and Connecticut $144 million[45] under the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program to improve broadband infrastructure and reach underserved communities. In Massachusetts, 31% of jobs were hybrid as of early 2025, and Boston saw 32% of new jobs classified as hybrid, reflecting significant opportunities for remote and flexible work arrangements.[46] Expanding broadband and remote work access is relevant to wealth building because it enables more residents to access higher-paying remote jobs, reduces commuting costs, and increases opportunities for economic mobility across the region.

4. **Enhancement of cybersecurity and fraud prevention among escalating risk.**
Cybersecurity threats are escalating, with an increase in sophisticated text message scams, known as "smishing," targeting smartphone users across the United States. In March 2025 alone, the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center received 1,573 reports of toll-related smishing scams in Georgia, nearly matching the total number of complaints from the previous 14 months combined, underscoring the rising scale and speed of cyber fraud targeting everyday financial transactions.[47] Strengthening cybersecurity is essential to protecting financial systems and consumer trust.

36 Surfaced trends that met all but one inclusion criteria: Open Banking and Data Sharing, Smart Homes and Energy Tech, Cashless and Contactless Society, Education Technology in Schools, Telehealth and Tele-service Normalization, E-commerce and Local Retail Tech, Assistive Tech and Accessibility, Precision Agriculture and Food Tech, Resilience Tech for Climate Adaptation, Blockchain and Financial Infrastructure, and Transportation Tech and Mobility
37 FedNow® Service launches new risk mitigation features and $1 million transaction limit, FedNow, 2025
38 The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's (CFPB) open banking rule, issued in October 2024, is a regulation that would require banks and other financial institutions to give consumers free, electronic access to their personal financial data, such as transaction history and account balances. Consumers could also authorize third parties, like budgeting apps or new banks, to access this data on their behalf. The rule is designed to make it easier for people to switch banks, compare financial products, and get better rates or services, which in turn is expected to boost competition and improve customer choice in the financial sector. It also includes privacy and security protections, such as requiring consumer consent for data sharing and prohibiting the use of data for unrelated purposes. As of June 2025, the rule's implementation is on hold pending a court decision about its legality.
39 https://www.forbes.com/sites/jaimecatmull/2024/11/05/how-to-grow-your-money-heading-into-2025/
40 Cleo, n.d.
41 PocketGuard, n.d.
42 Betterment, n.d
43 Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD), NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs, n.d.
44 Broadband Equity Access & Deployment (BEAD) Program, Massachusetts Broadband Institute, 2025
45 Connecticut Broadband Report, Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection, 2024
46 Remote Work Statistics and Trends for 2025, Robert Half, 2025
47 FBI Atlanta Warns of Smishing Scam Regarding Peach Pass, FBI Atlanta, 2025

Three emerging insights from the field

3

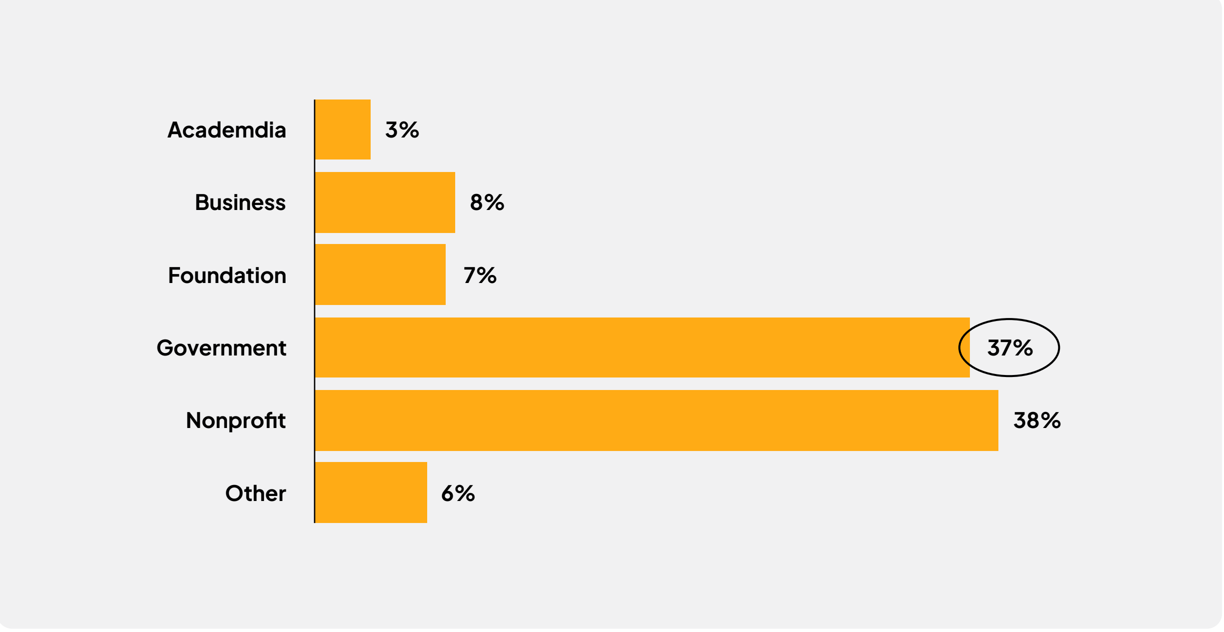
Against this backdrop, three key insights emerged from the pulse of wealth-building solutions. These insights aim to capture how the field is evolving by highlighting who is leading, what strategies they are pursuing, and where investment is most concentrated, offering thought starters for funders and ecosystem actors seeking to build wealth and financial resilience that is equitable, sustainable, and responsive to lived realities.

37% of new wealth-building initiatives in this study were launched by the public sector with the vast majority led at the state-level

Public sector leadership has been a driving force in the wealth-building landscape over the past five years, with approximately 90% of government-led initiatives in this study operating at the state level and about 9% at the municipal/city level. These initiatives aim to either grow assets (50% of initiatives in this city) or reduce liabilities (25% of initiatives in this study)[48,49] through programs such as baby bonds, children's savings accounts, universal basic income, homeownership support, debt relief, and retirement savings. Notably, government-led initiatives cover multiple life stages, from early life to retirement.

Early-life asset-building strategies such as Baby Bonds and Children's Savings Accounts (CSA)[50] are prevalent at state and city levels. Connecticut implemented a statewide Baby Bond program, providing every Medicaid-covered newborn a $3,200 trust account and impacting an estimated 16,000 children each year.[51] Vermont launched a similar pilot program through H.55[52] that has yet to scale, and Massachusetts is considering similar legislation. Additionally, across New England, statewide Children's Savings Account programs are already operating at scale across the region: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island all have state-wide CSA initiatives, while Boston Saves has set aside over $1.5 million in seed funding for around ~30,000 students and an additional ~$350,000 in family-earned incentives. Together, these programs demonstrate a shift toward proactive, upstream interventions that position families for long-term resilience.[53]

Figure 2: New Initiatives by Type of Organization (2020-2025)

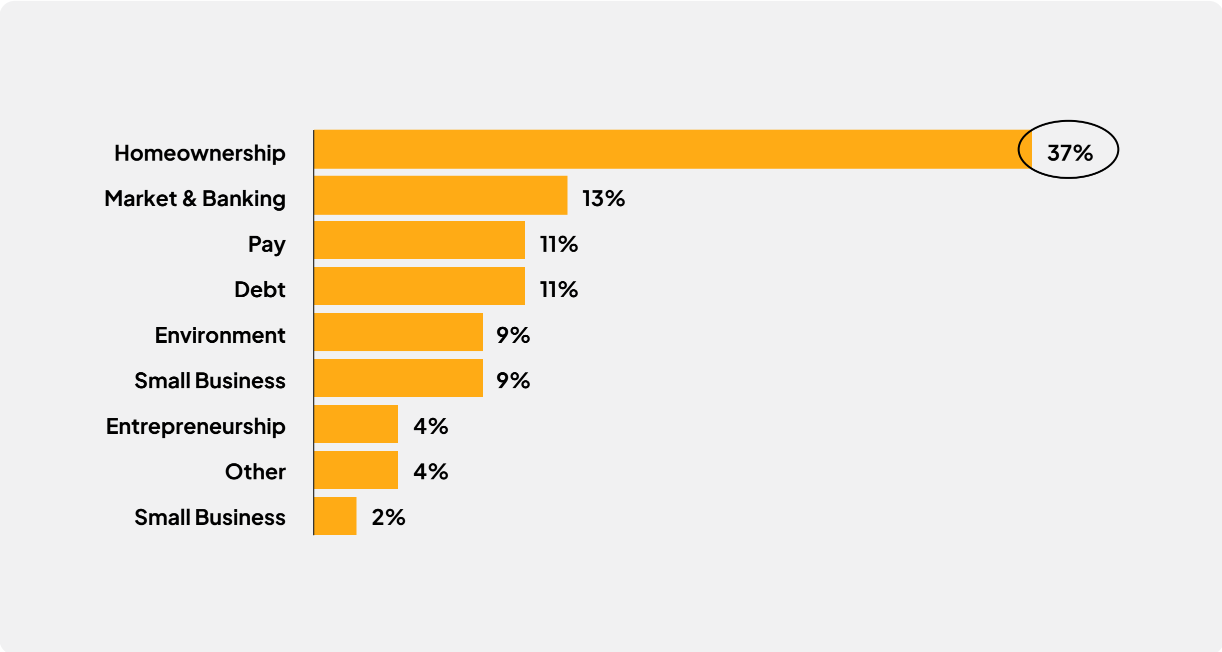


48 Of all government-led initiatives identified between 2020-2025, 59% focused on increasing assets, 25% on decreasing liabilities, 14% on empowering wealth building and 9% on sustaining wealth*
49 Note: Some initiatives use multiple wealth-building strategies (i.e. one singular initiative can have programming that both increases assets and empowers wealth-building). As a result, the percentages do not add up to 100%.
50 Wealth-Building for All Children: Convergence and Evidence to Support a Nationwide Policy, 2024.
51 CT Baby Bonds, The Office of Treasurer Erick Russell Connecticut Official State Website, n.d.
52 VT Baby Bonds, Office of the State Treasurer, 2025
53 Boston Saves Provides Financial Boost to BPS Students, Setting them up Future Success, City of Boston, 2025

Cities are also experimenting with cash-transfer models to provide immediate stability. Data from the landscape mapping shows variation among these initiatives, with payments ranging from $300 to $750 and participation spanning from 20 to 1,500 participants. Somerville, for example, is piloting a guaranteed income program that delivers $750 per month to 200 low-income or housing-insecure households.[54] These guaranteed income initiatives aim to help participants smooth cash flows, cover urgent needs without incurring debt, and begin to build savings. While these initiatives demonstrate the feasibility of city-led cash assistance, they reach a small portion of affected/eligible populations and thus raise important questions about the realistic path to scale.

A significant number (37%) of all government pilots launched between 2020 and 2025 in the landscape scan are focused on homeownership. Among these government pilots, nearly 60% focus on down payment and mortgage assistance. Most programs offer between $10,000 and $15,000 in support, though there are a few outliers that provide considerably more. For example, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston offers up to $50,000 in down payment and closing-cost assistance for first-time homebuyers of color earning at or below 120% of area median income. While the vast majority of these initiatives operate at the state level, select municipal programs are also emerging. In 2023, the City of Hartford launched a pilot offering forgivable loans of up to $10,000 to eligible city employees to support home purchases within city limits, with forgiveness contingent on continued residence. These interventions highlight the prominence of homeownership in the wealth-building landscape.

Figure 3: New Government Pilot Initiatives by Sector

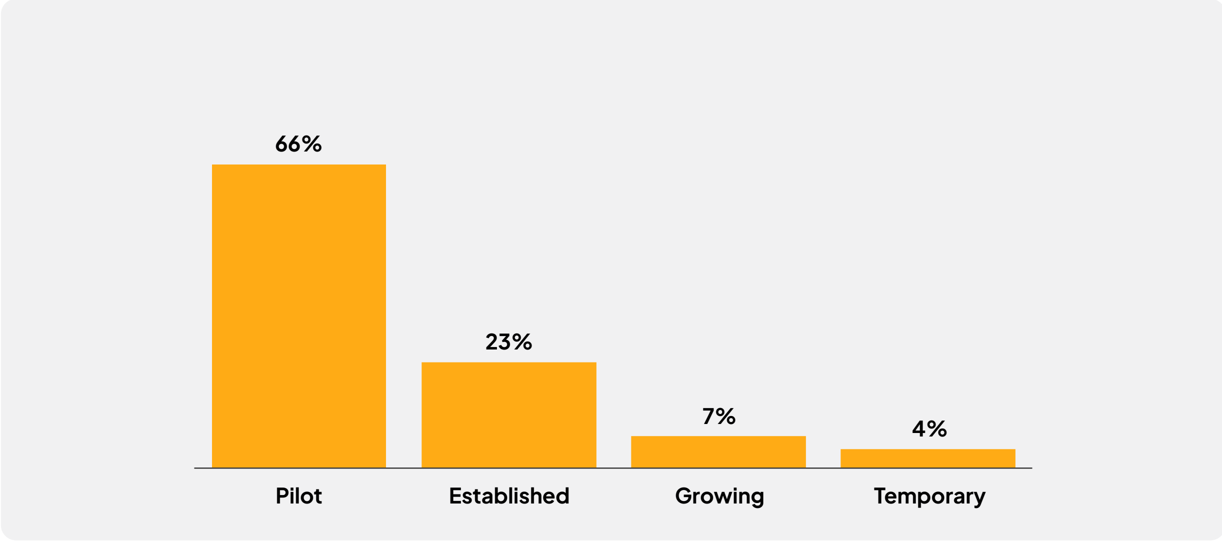


States are also expanding retirement savings infrastructure, leveraging automatic enrollment to extend retirement security to hundreds of thousands of private-sector workers. For example, Rhode Island's Secure Choice has enrolled roughly 172,000 workers – 40% of whom are saving for the first time[55] – and Connecticut's MyCTSavings now has over 30,000 savers.[56] By normalizing automatic enrollment, these programs redefine retirement security as an expected benefit for all workers. While uptake is growing, their long-term impact on wealth-building, particularly for workers struggling to make ends meet, will depend on complementary policies that address income volatility and affordability.

54 Guaranteed Basic Income Program, City of Sommerville, n.d.
55 Connecticut Retirement Security Program, 2025
56 Rhode Island Secure Choice Retirement Savings Program Would Help More Than 172,000 Workers Save, Pew Charitable Trusts, 2024

As shown in the examples above, most of these public-sector innovations remain modest in scale, with 66% of initiatives in the landscape scan tagged as pilots.[57] Administrative constraints, funding and budgeting, limited-service infrastructure, fragmented implementation, and shifting political winds often stall their momentum.

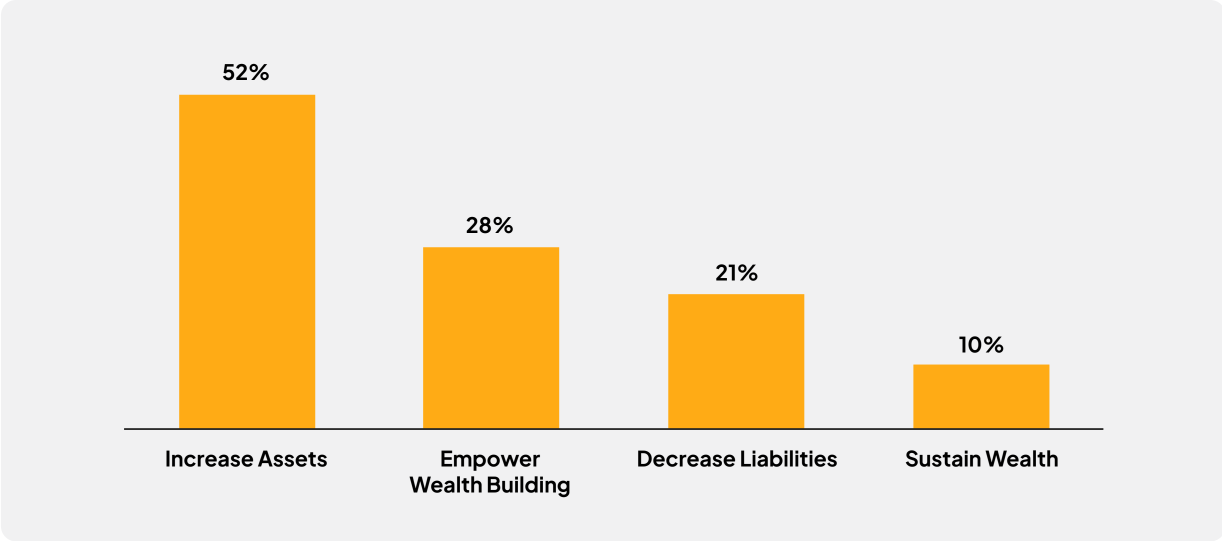
Figure 4: New Government Pilot Initiatives by Maturity



Asset-building strategies make up 52% of wealth-building solutions; fewer efforts help households sustain and protect wealth over time

Across New England, 52% of new wealth-building initiatives in this study focus on helping individuals increase assets by offering tools like financial coaching, small-business support, and educational resources and capital for homeownership. Across asset-building initiatives, roughly 54% include some elements of technical assistance, education, or support. These programs frequently serve as the primary access point for households seeking to improve their financial standing, highlighting a broader emphasis on facilitating entry into asset ownership, especially in homeownership and entrepreneurship.

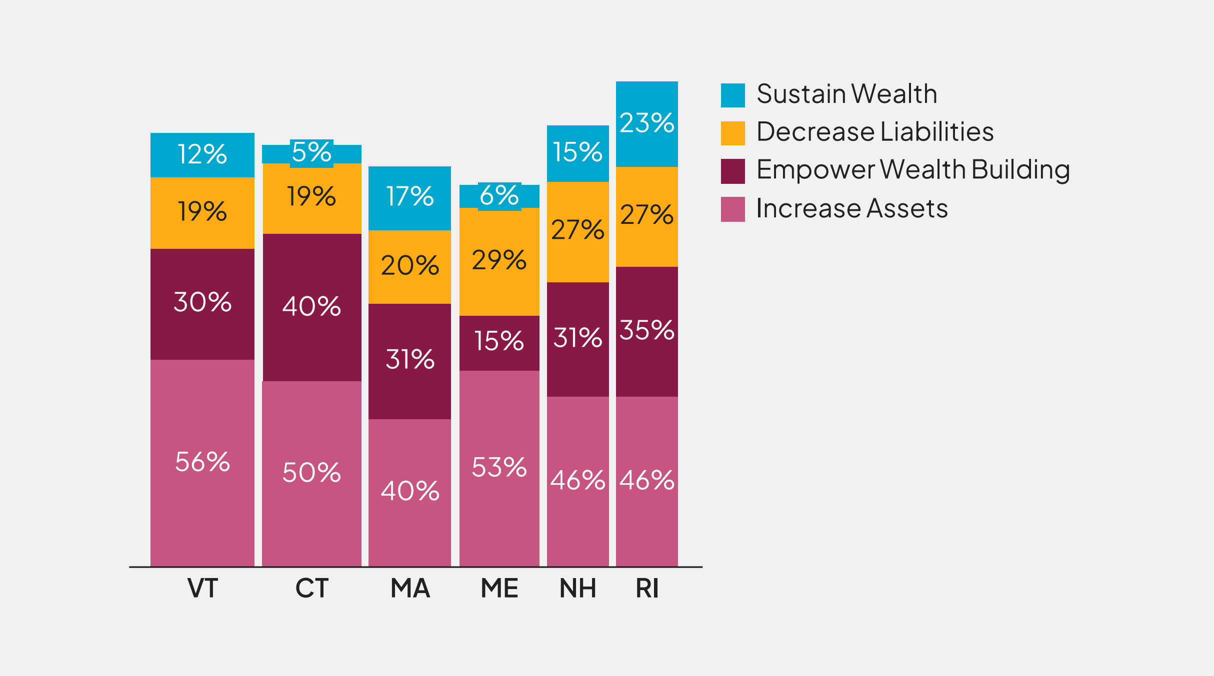
Figure 5: New Initiatives by Wealth-building Strategy (2020-2025)*



57 AI was used to pull information about initiative maturity, then tags were cleaned manually for consistent analysis

Building wealth is part of the challenge; sustaining it is important to ensure those gains endure. For example, while families often receive guidance through the purchase process, far fewer resources support them in maintaining their assets; services like post-purchase counseling, home repair financing, and foreclosure prevention remain less prevalent. Beyond homeownership, sustaining wealth also depends on access to financial tools that protect, grow, or transfer assets over time. Life insurance, for example, is a powerful yet underleveraged mechanism for intergenerational wealth transfer. Investment and retirement accounts offer lower-barrier alternatives to homeownership, but access and uptake remain uneven. In New England, only 62% of eligible workers participate in employer-sponsored retirement plans, and coverage gaps are especially stark among low-wage earners.[58] In most states, increasing assets accounts for nearly half of all initiatives, followed by empowering wealth-building strategies at 30–40% – except in Maine.[59,60] Without intentional investment to expand these layered "after-care" safeguards alongside traditional asset-building programs, routine shocks like medical bills or car repairs can swiftly erode nascent household wealth, undermining long-term economic stability and wealth building.

Figure 6: New Initiatives by State and Wealth-building Strategy (2020-2025)*



Only 10% of initiatives in the landscape seek to preserve or sustain wealth. This gap represents a structural vulnerability in the current wealth-building field. Without intentional investment in preservation strategies, progress can be easily reversed and opportunity lost. Research shows approximately 70% of families lose their wealth by the second generation and 90% by the third generation, highlighting the fragility of current approaches.[61] Funders can bridge this divide by investing in programs explicitly focused on sustaining household wealth, such as community-based credit-repair networks, nonprofit legal clinics offering estate planning, and pooled-risk insurance pilots. When paired with traditional asset-building approaches, these interventions can turn short-term wins into enduring, multigenerational security.

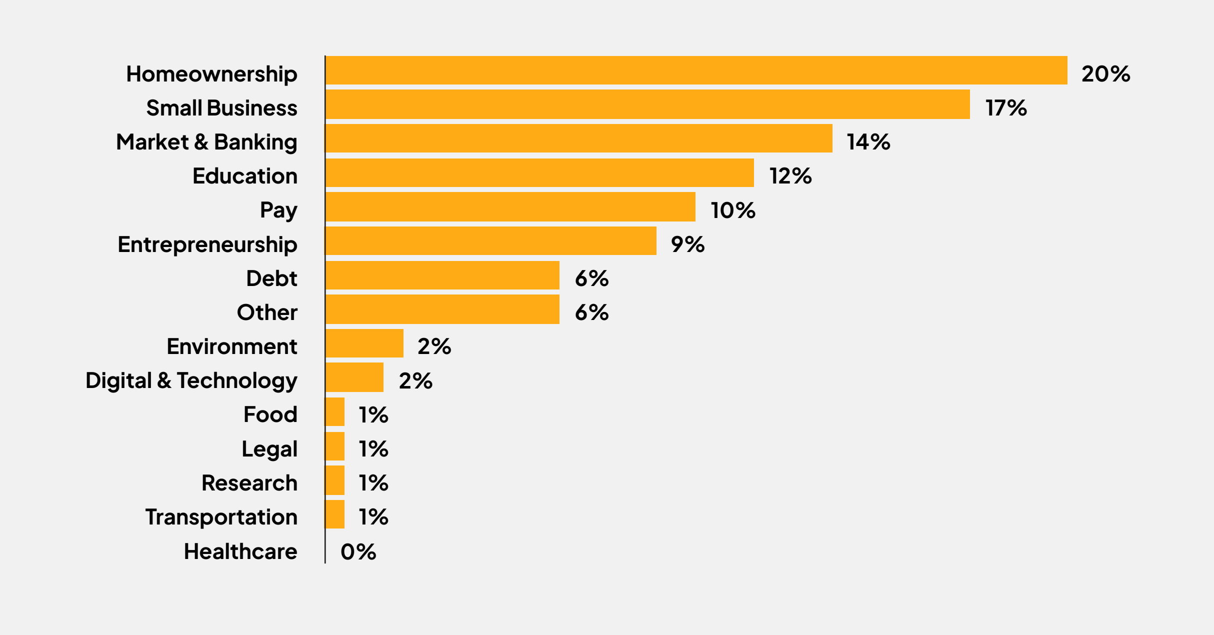
58 Retirement benefits: Access, participation, and take-up rates, US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2024
59 Approximately 60% of all initiatives categorized under Empowering Wealth-Building focused on solutions such as technical assistance, financial coaching, business support, budgeting and credit guidance, and workforce wraparound support
60 Note: Some initiatives use multiple wealth-building strategies (i.e. one singular initiative can have programming that both increases assets and empowers wealth building) and serve multiple states. As a result, the percentages do not add up to 100%.
61 Don't Risk It All: Areas Of Focus For High-Net-Worth Families, Forbes, 2023

* Note: Some initiatives use multiple wealth-building strategies (i.e. one singular initiative can have programming that both increases assets and empowers wealth building) and serve multiple states. As a result, the percentages do not add up to 100%.

◆ Homeownership and small business development account for the largest share of new wealth-building initiatives in New England (37% of initiatives in this study since 2020), though the leading sectors and solutions vary widely by state.

Homeownership has long been regarded as the cornerstone of wealth-building in America.[62] For decades, owning a home has been promoted as the most stable and accessible pathway to long-term asset accumulation and intergenerational wealth transfer. Public programs have historically focused on facilitating homeownership through down payment assistance and affordable lending – particularly for first-time and low-income buyers. A closer look at the wealth-building landscape in New England since 2020 reinforces this reality: homeownership remains a dominant focus, accounting for 20% of all new initiatives in this research, driven primarily by supports such as down payment assistance and homeownership loans aimed at overcoming structural barriers to property ownership.

Figure 7: New Initiatives by Sector (2020-2025)



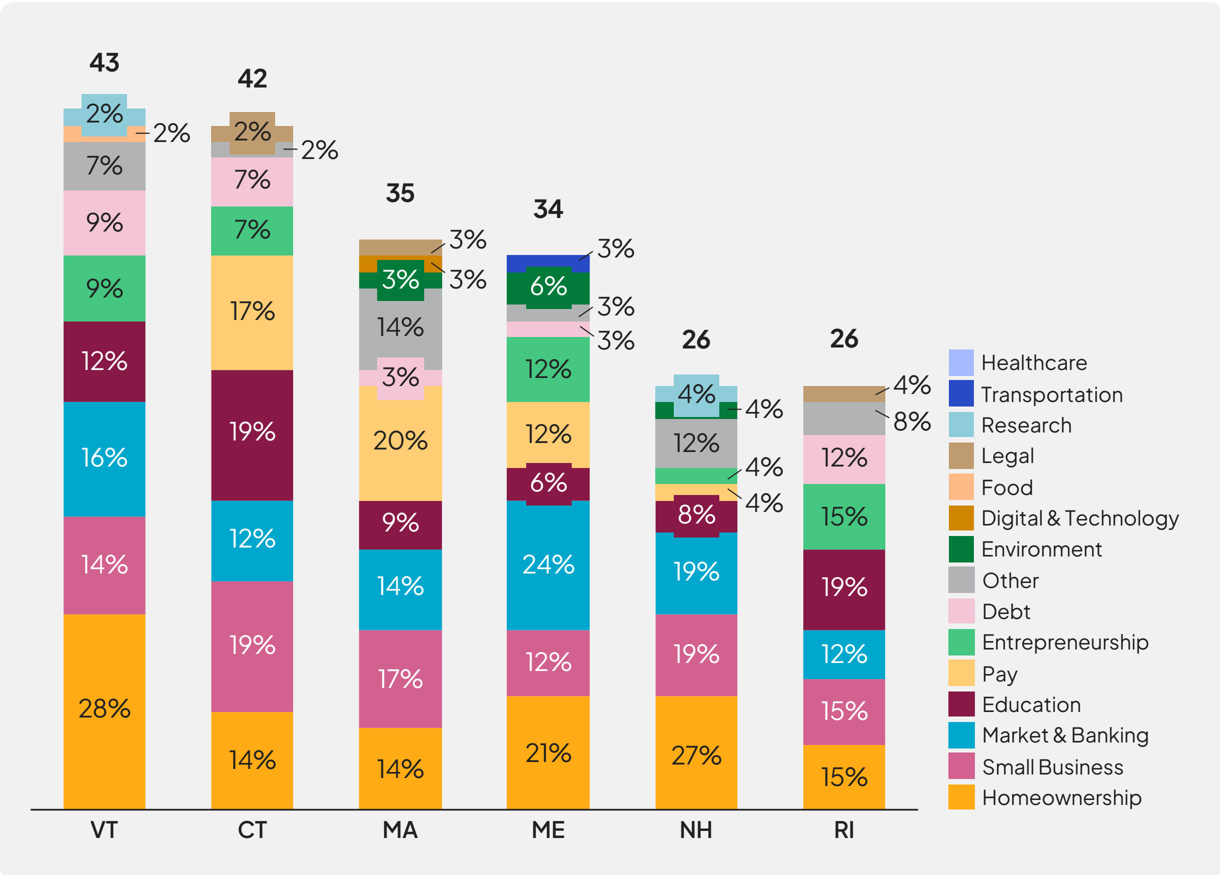
Yet despite the continued focus on homeownership, its accessibility is fundamentally limited by market dynamics, with affordability challenges persisting across the region. Since 2020, demand for housing has consistently outpaced supply in New England, with permitting rates in all six states falling below the national average.[63] Additionally, states like Vermont and New Hampshire exemplify the limits of homeownership-led wealth strategies: despite prioritizing homeownership initiatives (28% and 27% of initiatives in this study, respectively), both face acute shortages in housing supply; Vermont projects a shortfall of 36,000 units,[64] and New Hampshire estimates a need for nearly 60,000 new homes by 2030.[65] These conditions make it clear that while homeownership remains a vital component of the wealth-building toolbox, it cannot stand alone as the only pathway to wealth-building; too many households will be excluded from ownership by structural market failures.

62 Rethinking Homeownership as "the American Dream", Urban Institute, 2023
63 New England's Housing Markets: Supply and Demand Factors Affecting Housing Prices across the Region, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, 2025
64 Vermont Housing Analysis and Housing Needs Assessment, Agency of Commerce and Community Development, 2025
65 2023 New Hampshire Statewide Housing Needs Assessment, New Hampshire Housing 2023

Against the supply-side shortages in homeownership, states are also investing in small business development, which accounts for 17% of new initiatives in this research region wide. Technical assistance and coaching (present in 42% of small business initiatives in this study) is the most common solution in the small business sector. This trend reflects an understanding that capital access alone is not enough; successful entrepreneurship also requires ongoing support, especially for under-resourced small business owners. These efforts emphasize skill-building and support in addition to capital distribution.

Meanwhile, states are also using financial literacy solutions to help households build wealth. In this study, Connecticut and Rhode Island stand out with the highest share of initiatives in education (19%) followed by New Hampshire (12%). Connecticut, in particular, faces mounting financial strain across households: as of 2023, it ranked fifth nationally for average credit card debt and held the highest overall personal debt levels in New England.[66] This pressure has spurred public-sector policy: Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire have all adopted a graduation requirement mandating financial literacy instruction covering topics including banking, investing, credit, and saving.[67,68,69] These efforts are reinforced by nonprofit partnerships, such as The Village for Families & Children's collaboration with LISC Connecticut since 2020 to operate a Financial Opportunity Center in Hartford, which in 2024 expanded its services to further empower families through integrated financial education, coaching, and matched savings incentives.[70] By helping residents build credit, grow income, and accumulate assets, these centers extend wealth-building opportunities beyond government programs.

Figure 8: New Initiatives by State and Sector (2020-2025)*



66 The U.S. States Most Impacted By Household Debt 2023, National Business Capital, 2023
67 Personal Financial Management and Financial Literacy, CT Department of Education, 2023
68 Strategy for Assuring Financial Empowerment (SAFE) Report, 2023
69 A Review of Large-Scale Youth Financial Literacy Education Policies and Programs, 2018
70 LISC Financial Opportunity Centers, LISC Connecticut, n.d.

*Note: Note: Some initiatives operate in multiple states. As a result, the percentages do not add up to 100%.

While homeownership and small business ownership remain prominent in New England's wealth-building landscape, the concentration of initiatives in these areas suggests a field still heavily reliant on traditional asset-building approaches. However, as highlighted in the PEST analysis, these approaches may struggle to keep pace with emerging challenges such as persistent housing affordability crises, rising household debt, climate-related disruptions to local economies, and the automation of entry-level jobs. Other solutions – including financial literacy mandates in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire; Hartford's Financial Opportunity Center combining coaching with matched savings; and auto-IRA programs extending retirement security to underserved workers – illustrate the importance of multi-pronged, cross-sectoral approaches that address wealth-building holistically across life stages and systems. To keep pace with these shifting dynamics, future solutions must integrate technological advancements (including AI), address persistent supply-side constraints, reflect changing demographic realities, and be built to withstand economic volatility and climate-related shocks.

◆ Considerations for funders, policymakers, and leaders in the wealth-building space

The pulse of wealth-building initiatives across New England points to a field with steady activity but one that remains largely concentrated in traditional approaches. While homeownership and small business development continue to dominate, these pathways are under pressure from external forces – affordability crises, demographic shifts, climate risks, and technological disruption – that are reshaping the context in which households build and sustain wealth.

These dynamics raise important questions for funders, policymakers, and ecosystem leaders: Are current interventions sufficient to meet the challenges ahead? Where might complementary strategies be needed to ensure households not only gain wealth but are able to preserve and grow it across generations? And how can actors across sectors align to strengthen an ecosystem that too often operates in silos?

To navigate this moment, three priorities emerge from the findings:

1. **Explore opportunities to invest in scaling solutions.**
   Given that many promising wealth-building models remain in the pilot or early adoption stage, their impact will remain limited without intentional support for scale. While pilots are valuable for testing ideas, funders can play a catalytic role by investing in the infrastructure, learning, and partnerships needed to move successful models beyond proof-of-concept. Not all models are destined for wide adoption. To maximize impact, funders should prioritize models with compelling paths to scale that demonstrate both effectiveness and the potential for broader adoption and invest in making them scale-ready. In doing so, funders can help transform promising experiments into lasting, system-level solutions.

2. **Expand support for solutions that strengthen resilience in the face of accelerating change and ensure households can sustain wealth over time.**
   Given that most wealth-building programs emphasize asset accumulation, there is often insufficient attention to the strategies required to sustain those assets over time, such as post-purchase counseling, adequate insurance, and estate planning. This gap is particularly consequential for first-time asset holders and households vulnerable to financial shocks, who face the heightened risk of losing newly acquired wealth. As broader forces like climate disruption, economic volatility, demographic shifts, and technological change put new pressures on household stability, this gap will only become more pronounced. Funders can play a pivotal role in closing this gap by investing in partnerships that connect otherwise disparate actors such as financial coaches, social service agencies, and legal providers to deliver a

continuum of support. While some funders already incorporate asset preservation into their strategies, broader, more intentional investment in these protective supports is needed to ensure families can retain gains and realize the full, long-term value of wealth-building efforts.

3. **Strengthen connections across the ecosystem by supporting integrative, cross-sector efforts.** A wide set of actors are supporting wealth-building initiatives, but too often these efforts operate in silos. As external forces – like demographic shifts, climate risks, and technological change – reshape household needs, there is a growing opportunity to foster alignment across sectors. Funders can play a pivotal role by supporting initiatives that bridge housing, workforce development, health, and financial well-being, ensuring solutions that are responsive to emerging trends and interconnected challenges. They can also convene partners who may not traditionally see themselves as part of the wealth-building space, helping to create coalitions capable of addressing complex, cross-cutting issues. By knitting together fragmented efforts, philanthropic and public funders (with support from the private sector if there is sufficient coordination) can help create pathways for households to access the full suite of supports they need to build and sustain financial resilience.

Looking ahead: A field with steady growth facing pressure to adapt

New England's wealth-building landscape is marked by steady levels of activity, urgency to adapt, and a complex environment of actors and solutions.

The PEST analysis highlights several dynamics shaping the future of wealth-building. Rising housing costs and persistent supply shortages risk excluding many families from homeownership, while climate-related disruptions, from flooding to insurer pullbacks, are challenging the durability of existing assets. Demographic shifts, including an aging population and increasing cultural diversity, are reshaping household needs and financial behaviors. Meanwhile, younger generations are engaging with wealth differently, turning to social media for financial advice, adopting peer-to-peer payment systems, and seeking more flexible financial tools suited to evolving economic realities. These emergent challenges underscore that no single approach will suffice.

Looking ahead, there is an opportunity to explore how future solutions can better anticipate these pressures. This includes integrating technological advancements (such as AI-enabled financial planning), addressing supply-side constraints, and designing interventions resilient to economic volatility and environmental shocks. There is also a need to strengthen supports that help households sustain and protect their gains over time – through post-purchase counseling, estate planning, insurance innovations, and tools that buffer against routine financial shocks.

By aligning on scalable, inclusive models; fostering cross-sector collaboration rooted in local realities; and investigating approaches responsive to emerging trends, funders and ecosystem leaders can help the field adapt to meet new challenges. Through sustained, coordinated action, New England has the potential to build a more equitable, resilient, and future-ready foundation for household financial security and upward mobility.

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