

Self-Helper

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New Credit Modules to Be Released



Module 1: Understanding Credit

NCALL staff hears the story time and time again—there are people interested in Mutual Self-Help Housing, but once their credit report comes back, they find out they don't qualify. So what's an organization to do to help solve this? We know that providing credit

counseling on an individual basis is effective and wonderful, but it can take a lot of time. We know that is something many group workers do not have in abundance.

NCALL may have a solution—a credit repair class that's ready right out of the box! In the next few weeks each grantee in Region III will receive a package containing all the materials needed to host a three part credit repair course. The course is designed to be easy to learn how to teach, with three modules, each containing a guide to help the presenter through the presentation, a participant manual to help keep them informed and on track, a PowerPoint presentation to help facilitate the course, and several handouts. The modules were reviewed in collaboration with Financial Coaches at NCALL to make sure they contain relevant information being taught in similar courses in the credit counseling industry.

Each module takes about one hour, but you can feel free to provide them in the method and timeframe that works best with your team's schedule. They could be offered once per week for three weeks or once per month for three months, or any other way you see fit.

The first module acts as an introduction to credit. Although it covers the basics, it's designed to be useful and informative to those with moderate credit knowledge, or those who are new to the subject. Participants will learn about the main credit bureaus and how their credit information

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Credit Modules *(Continued from Page 1)*

gets reported. They'll find out which bills and payments get reported regularly and which only get reported when there are paid late. They'll learn how to pull their own reports and analyze them as if they were a lender determining eligibility for a loan or line of credit. They will also see an example of a credit report to learn the different parts they will see when pulling one for themselves.

Attendees will learn the "Five C's" of credit, think about their overall spending habits and determine where they fall on the spectrum of credit scores. Credit is a complex topic; to understand it a person needs to step back and look at the bigger picture in addition to learning the rules.

Module number 2, Establishing and Restoring Your Credit, picks up right where module 1 leaves off. It goes into great depth about the technical aspects of establishing and restoring credit, including options such as secured credit cards, credit builder loans, cosigners and other possibilities. It goes over the common ways that credit becomes damaged, and how long those marks can stay on the report. Sometimes blemishes are inaccurate on reports, or can be removed once payment is made, or there is room for negotiation to reduce the amount or terms of the debt, and this class covers that too.

There is plenty of information pertaining to what should be done after the class now that they understand the importance of

establishing and restoring their credit. They'll learn about the dangers of quick fixes and scams, to help keep them from becoming a victim. There are no repairs that can't be done by the individual, and the class is designed to give them the skills to do just that! They will avoid paying someone else to do it for them as a best case scenario, and avoid spending money with no reward or becoming a victim of fraud as a worst case scenario.

The last module, Maintaining Your Credit, is not just about keeping up with payments and doing the things the first two modules teach—they'll learn they need to budget, and will receive online tools and methods to help make it easier for them. There is also plenty of information about laws and rights.

We really hope these classes will help you develop a potential waiting list as well as help your community have a better understanding of their credit and how to improve it! If you are interested in learning more ways to get the most out of the class, please read the article on the next page titled "Credit Modules as a Marketing Tool," and consider it for later down the road or whenever you feel comfortable. Please feel free to use them as you think works best.

NCALL plans on having this material in the hands of our grantees in the first few weeks of January! They are with the printing company now. When you receive the package it will include a flash drive with all the electronic versions on it and a hard



Module 2: Establishing and Restoring Your Credit



Module 3: Maintaining Your Credit

copy version of each part of the modules to keep on hand as an easy reference. If you have any questions or would like further training on administering the modules, please contact us. We are glad to help!

Rural Development Interest Rate

The Rural Development 502 Direct note rate has been steady over the last few months. However, December's rate went down from 3.75% to 3.25%.

Credit Modules as a Marketing Tool

Word of mouth is one of the most common ways grantees report finding new families. When people learn about the program and talk face-to-face with someone who knows it well, it's something they will likely keep in mind for friends and family that need an alternative method to homeownership. The more interaction they have with your organization, the more memorable the program will become to them. However, promoting the program takes time. When there is so much to be done behind the scenes, you'll want to get the most out of any time you spend working with the public. The credit modules can help with this!

Think of the class as a way to keep several groups of people engaged with your program at one time. For example—you can advertise the credit repair class in conjunction

with a short public meeting to inform attendants of the self-help program.

You can reach more people at once by hosting it online using a service like Skype or Google Hangouts. Just make sure never to divulge confidential information over these programs, and ask that participants enter the room as anonymous guests or with first names only. If you want to take full advantage of this method of hosting meetings, consider a paid, fully secure program like GoToWebinar or GoToMeeting, both by Citrix.

You can advertise the credit repair workshop on Facebook by creating an event for it and asking partner organizations to share it, or include it as a link in your newsletter. You can also try boosting a Facebook post and paying an amount you feel



comfortable with—perhaps \$10 or \$20. You can target those whose location and age fit the pool of people likely to be interested. Take it a step further by targeting “does not own a home.”

Once the class is complete, ask participants if they want to sign up for your email list to keep in touch and provide the contact information for the group worker or person they should reach out to for more information about self-help housing.

USDA RD Executive Leadership Changes Announced

The Chief of Staff for Rural Development has been appointed. A [Stakeholder Announcement](#) detailing this was released December 4th. In this announcement Anne Hazlett has appointed Curtis Anderson as Chief of Staff for Rural Development's Rural Housing Service. Then on December 19th he was named as the Acting Administrator of the Rural Housing Service.

Anderson brings with him over 25 years of executive leadership experience in strategic planning, organizational development, and performance improvement for medium-to large-sized organizations

in both the public and private sectors. Most recently, Anderson worked as a strategic advisor and business coach for telecommunications associations and companies, specializing in program and legislative issues. Prior to that, Anderson served as the Deputy Administrator for USDA Rural Development's Rural Utilities Service, managing \$10 billion in annual grants and loans for rural electrification, telecommunications, and water and waste infrastructure. With additional experience at Farm Credit and the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, Anderson has a passion for serving rural communities.

As Chief of Staff for the Rural Housing Service, Anderson will supervise the day-to-day operations of the agency, with more than 100 staff and a \$29 billion annual budget.

USDA Rural Development encourages partners and stakeholder groups to reach out to Anderson in his new role to build on existing partnerships and facilitate new relationships.

Another Stakeholder Announcement that was released on November 20th, reported that Gina Sheets has been selected to serve as the (Continued on Page 4)

Leadership Changes *(Continued from Page 3)*

Chief Innovation Officer for Rural Development. Sheets has more than 20 years' experience working in economic development at the local and state level, building prosperity in rural communities through small business development and economic attraction. A long-time small business owner, she served as a local elected official at the start of her career and later as Director of Agriculture under Indiana Governor Mike Pence. In addition to her economic development and local leadership experience, Sheets and her husband served as missionaries in Liberia, where she was responsible for coordinating a farmer-to-farmer capacity building program and extending agriculture education and small business

development practices.

As Chief Innovation Officer, Sheets will oversee the creation and management of the Rural Development Innovation Center, a team within Rural Development working to streamline, modernize and strengthen the delivery of Rural Development tools efficiently. The Innovation Center will focus on improving customer service to rural communities and increasing rural prosperity through strategic partnerships, capacity-building, data analytics and evaluation, and regulatory reform. The Innovation Center will also inform policy decisions and develop creative solutions to rural economic development.

Regional Conference Call Planned

NCALL will be hosting another regional conference call on **Thursday, January 25th at 10:00 a.m.** for an open discussion. Please join us and be prepared to share your thoughts and questions. More information will be coming out closer to the call.

Rural Development Releases New 502 Webinar

In late October, Rural Development posted a new webinar on their website. The webinar is entitled "Section 502 Direct Loan Program's Pre-Qualification and Application Processes." The purpose of this presentation is to give viewers a basic overview of the Section 502 direct loan program's pre-qualification and application processes. While this recorded webinar is targeted to RD staff, others (such as loan application packagers) may find the covered materials useful.

The presentation is a 42 minute video with 29 slides. Visit RD's [website](#) to view the link to watch the webinar or download the handouts.

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*Wishing you a Wonderful
Holiday Season and a
Happy New Year!!*

