FDIC
Money Smart

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Understanding Credit as a Key Financial Skill

Vea esta página en español (https://www.fdic.gov/consumer-resource-center/2026-03/entender-el-credito-como-una-habilidad-financiera-clave)

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Send us your Money Smart success stories at ConsumerEducation@fdic.gov (mailto:ConsumerEducation@fdic.gov).

Use Money Smart to Teach Credit as a Key Financial Skill

March is National Credit Education Month. Understanding credit and credit scores is essential to making informed financial decisions. Credit scores affect a person's ability to qualify for loans and favorable interest rates on credit cards, auto loans, and mortgages. Helping people learn how to build and manage credit—such as paying bills on time, keeping balances low, and understanding credit reports—helps them avoid common pitfalls, like missing or late payments on bills, and support their long-term financial stability.

Help raise awareness of key credit concepts with these free Money Smart curriculums and online financial education games:

- Money Smart for Young Adults: (https://www.fdic.gov/resources/consumers/money-smart/teach-money-smart/money-smart-for-young-adults.html) Module 7: Borrowing Basics, Module 8: Charge It Right, Module 10: Buying a Car, and Module 11: Paying for Education and Training
- Money Smart for Adults: (https://www.fdic.gov/resources/consumers/money-smart/teach-money-smart/money-smart-for-adults.html) Module 6: Credit Reports & Credit Scores, Module 7: Borrowing Basics, Module 8: Managing Debt, Module 9: Using Credit Cards, Module 13: Buying a Home, and Module 11: Protecting Your Identity
- Money Smart for Small Business: (https://www.fdic.gov/resources/consumers/money-smart/money-smart-for-small-business/) Planning for a Healthy Business and Banking Services Available for Small Business
- *How Money Smart Are You?*: (https://playmoneysmart.fdic.gov/games) Borrowing Basics, Credit Reports and Scores, Managing Debt, Using Credit Cards, and Making Housing Decisions

Learn more at FDIC.gov/MoneySmart. (http://www.fdic.gov/moneysmart)

Success Story: Tri Counties Bank Advances Credit Education in the Community

This month, we interviewed long-time Money Smart user and Money Smart Alliance member (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Furldefense.com%2Fv3%2F__https%3A%2Fwww.fdic.gov%2Fconsumer-resource-center%2Fmoney-smart-alliance__%3B!!CFkQ8dZZefR8!K09K-f4n45kv5Cz2aqR0OpJ2qgd7VVqNQzDP5_5D0yTvukOiDR9rTkxakkpNfHzGm_aBhF3J_zzCeArN%24&data=05%7C02%7Cdtarin%40fdic.gov%7C732f11e7a8be41bb0c5408de60345fd8%7C26c83bc931c14d77a5230816095aba31%7C0%7C0%7C639053975228309051%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=uqJhh3%2FKJpII5N6EpUkLLuckcXqk0EY37oIvn%2Fsm16c%3D&reserved=0), Drew Costa, Vice President, Community Development Officer at **Tri Counties Bank**, headquartered in Chico, California. Mr. Costa supports the Bank's Community Reinvestment Act program, which focuses on providing community development lending, investments and services. “Our Community Development Service includes volunteerism by our employees to provide financial literacy education in their local neighborhoods.”

How long has your organization been teaching Money Smart?

“For as long as I can remember, we've had the Money Smart Curriculum (https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Furldefense.com%2Fv3%2F__https%3A%2Fwww.fdic.gov%2Fconsumer-resource-center%2Fmoney-smart__%3B!!CFkQ8dZZefR8!K09K-f4n45kv5Cz2aqR0OpJ2qgd7VVqNQzDP5_5D0yTvukOiDR9rTkxakkpNfHzGm_aBhF3J_9PAyQcb%24&data=05%7C02%7Cdtarin%40fdic.gov%7C732f11e7a8be41bb0c5408de60345fd8%7C26c83bc931c14d77a5230816095aba31%7C0%7C0%7C639053975228334164%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=69mVY6SXHNlTRFdmrrSZEuZ0A3nvRcasXQ9J59eCN4k%3D&reserved=0) available to employees that volunteer. I have used the modules throughout my 20-year career. Our bank has been featuring the financial literacy efforts of our employees across the state in our company volunteer newsletter for the past couple of years in order to promote the use of the curriculum even further. Money Smart has been around for 25 years, and I think we were very early adopters. We continue to use it as a primary tool for community outreach and financial literacy presentations.”

Does your organization use FDIC Money Smart to teach credit and personal finance?

"We use the Money Smart modules generally, with a focus on personal finance and credit. The modules that are selected allow the bank to share expert knowledge on personal and business finance, and in many cases focus on credit scores and credit repair. But also, topics that are very common include budgeting and financial success."

How do you tailor Money Smart to meet the unique needs of your community?

"We tailor the delivery by leveraging our background in retail and commercial banking to address the specific needs of different groups, such as focusing on business topics for small businesses or credit basics for young adults. I think the credit module is important to talk about with graduating high school seniors. These students are getting ready to go into their young adult life and having the knowledge to make wise credit decisions for themselves can make a big difference. I think having a foundation is very important to their future success."

Can you share your experience on teaching credit using Money Smart?

"I think that generally there's been a lack of financial education on credit. So, in my experience, people get into their personal finances with limited knowledge, and in a lot of cases end up kind of stubbing their toes with credit. And, if you have a negative experience with credit early in your life, I think that likely creates a belief that, 'credit is bad, or 'I got taken advantage of'. There can be some strong negative feelings, particularly if you're not well versed in credit. But on the flipside, if a borrower manages credit wisely, it can open so many doors to reaching their dreams like owning a home or starting a business. I want to help people understand those amazing benefits and take precautions to avoid the risks. We can make a big impact regarding credit education by using the Money Smart curriculum in our communities. It may help to unravel a little bit of the mystery, so you know about what went wrong or how you can manage this differently next time."

Do you have any tips/techniques for others based on your use of the materials?

"For somebody that is new, or not a professional public speaker, the instructor guide is going to be helpful in building your confidence with the materials. And as you get more comfortable with the materials, you can loosely follow the script and really adapt the presentation to your style and your experience. If you're up against a time constraint, don't feel like you must cover every page. There's great framework to use. I think that filling in the blanks with your own personal experience in the industry or with finance is impactful. The instructor guide can give you a play-by-play script or you can also use it as a basis for the conversation and make the presentation your own."

Submit Your Money Smart Success Story

Have a Money Smart success story? Send it to ConsumerEducation@fdic.gov (mailto:ConsumerEducation@fdic.gov)**. It may be included in a future newsletter.**

Upcoming Events

Financial Education & Frontline Action to Address Scams (https://www.fdic.gov/consumer-resource-center/events/financial-education-frontline-action-address-scams) (March 12, 2026)

For more consumer resources, visit FDIC.gov (https://www.fdic.gov/), or go to the FDIC Knowledge Center (https://ask.fdic.gov/fdicinformationandsupportcenter/s/public-information?language=en_US). You can also call the FDIC toll-free at 1-877-ASK-FDIC (tel:18772753342) (1-877-275-3342 (tel:18772753342)). Please send your story ideas or comments to ConsumerEducation@fdic.gov (mailto:consumereducation@fdic.gov). You can subscribe (https://www.fdic.gov/about/subscriptions/) to this and other free FDIC publications to keep informed!

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