



YOUR MONEY, YOUR GOALS

Focus on Native Communities

A companion guide to assist tribal staff and organizations in their work with community members.

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Introduction

Focus on Native Communities provides information and tools to help you meaningfully connect *Your Money, Your Goals* to the community members you serve.

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) is a 21st century agency that helps consumer finance markets work by regularly identifying and addressing outdated, unnecessary, or unduly burdensome regulations, by making rules more effective, by consistently enforcing federal consumer financial law, and by empowering consumers to take more control over their economic lives. The CFPB seeks to provide people with the information, skills and tools that they need to make smart financial decisions.

Your Money, Your Goals is part of that work. The CFPB launched *Your Money, Your Goals* in 2014 to provide training, information, and tools for frontline staff and volunteers in organizations that work with low-income and economically vulnerable consumers. Those organizations include public and private social services agencies, tribal social service and housing programs, legal aid and pro bono attorney organizations, organizations that engage community volunteers, and organizations that serve workers. Since that time, *Your Money, Your Goals* has been used in nearly every state, and in several Native Communities.

This companion guide—*Focus on Native Communities*—contains additional information, tips, and tools based on the wisdom of tribal staff and organizations that serve Native Communities. Its goal is to meaningfully connect the content and tools in *Your Money, Your Goals* to the Native Communities in which you live and work.

The CFPB designed *Your Money, Your Goals* to provide high quality financial information and tools to help individuals and communities become more financially empowered and self-determined. If they choose to use it, each individual or community decides how to use *Your Money, Your Goals*. You can use the entire toolkit, specific sections or tools within the toolkit, or adapt the toolkit to better serve members of your community. You can also choose to use the program's issue-focused booklets and companion guides alone or in combination with the toolkit.

Creation of *Your Money, Your Goals*

In the summer of 2012, the CFPB's Office of Financial Empowerment started thinking about how it could reach the millions of people in this country with low incomes or limited resources with high quality, unbiased financial information. Its staff saw an opportunity to provide empowering information and tools that strengthen financial skills through intermediary organizations—the staff and volunteers of non-profit, public, and tribal entities. Building on existing, trust-based relationships, community services staff and volunteers could become sources of financial empowerment information and tools that would be relevant to the people they serve.

Your Money, Your Goals toolkit, user guides, and training materials are available at consumerfinance.gov/your-money-your-goals.

To ensure *Your Money, Your Goals* met the needs of these staff, the CFPB tested it in more than two dozen organizations and communities in 2013. Native American organizations were part of the pilot and Four Bands Community Fund in Eagle Butte, SD trained tribal housing staff and local small business counselors to use the toolkit.

In 2014-2015 a national rollout began taking *Your Money, Your Goals* to scale. The Sault Sainte Marie Tribe of the Chippewa Indians joined federal agencies, national associations, and local and state governments in a national rollout that trained thousands of frontline staff and volunteers across the country to use *Your Money, Your Goals*. Tribal leaders incorporated traditional practices and storytelling into the training they offered to tribal and local social and human services staff and at a national conference.

In early 2016, representatives from the following tribes and organizations gathered to reflect on the experiences these leaders had in sharing the toolkit and on ways to share additional information that could assist other Native Communities in implementing *Your Money, Your Goals*:

- Citizen Potawatomi Nation
- Chippewa Cree Tribe
- Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
- Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians
- Seminole Tribe of Florida
- Office of the Special Trustee
- The American Indian Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Outcomes of *Your Money, Your Goals*

Your Money, Your Goals may benefit individuals and families in your community by helping them:

- Set goals based on their values.
- Make plans to reach their goals.
- Use cash flow to cover living expenses today and plan for the future.
- Get rid of debt.
- Review credit reports and fix errors.
- Choose the right financial products and services to meet their needs.
- Recognize their consumer rights, how to protect them, and what to do if they have been violated.
- Protect elders from financial exploitation.

Your Money, Your Goals may also provide benefits to your community as a whole, by supporting efforts to ensure that:

- Community members are able to take care of their financial needs and obligations and contribute to the community.
- Community members are able to make informed decisions about protecting and growing community assets.
- Community members are better able to protect elders from financial abuse and exploitation.
- Community members are able to make informed decisions about balancing today's needs while planning for the next generation.

In addition, communities that have established a goal of decreasing members' reliance on tribal financial support programs may find tools and information in *Your Money, Your Goals* they can use as they work toward that goal.

Thank you for considering using the *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit for your community. This guide includes the following sections to help you adapt its content to effectively empower your members and communities:

- Native Communities and financial empowerment.
- Cultural and emotional influences on financial decision making.
- Using *Your Money, Your Goals* in Native Communities.
- *Your Money, Your Goals* content modules, providing context for the topics covered in each module as well as supplemental tools specially designed for use in Native Communities.
- Special module on financial empowerment and elders.

Native Communities and financial empowerment

Financial empowerment ensures people have unbiased information, so they can use their financial resources to increase self-determination and reach their goals.

Your Money, Your Goals is a financial empowerment toolkit. To understand *Your Money, Your Goals*, it's important to understand the definition of financial empowerment and the concept of a toolkit.

What is financial empowerment?

Financial empowerment first provides people with information and opportunities to build skills. This is the groundwork that equips them to make informed choices and then transform those choices into actions to reach their own financial goals. Financial empowerment is about ensuring people know how to see the advantages and disadvantages to financial products and services—like bank and credit union accounts, prepaid cards, credit cards, or loans—and make decisions that are best for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Financially empowered people know where to get help with their financial challenges and can access and choose financial products and services that meet their needs. This sense of empowerment can build people's confidence that they can effectively steward their financial resources to increase self-determination and reach their goals.

Being knowledgeable and confident in your own approach to money means that you can better help people in your community face their money issues. You can help them use their financial resources to live today while planning for tomorrow and the next generation.

The *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit is designed to do just that—help you enhance your own knowledge and skills so you can help people in your community.

What is a toolkit?

A toolkit is different from a curriculum. A curriculum helps you learn about a set of related topics, and you generally learn it from beginning to end.

A toolkit has information and tools that can be used in any order based on the problem you are trying to fix—just like a tool box. If you are hanging a picture, you may only use a hammer. But if you are trying to build a house, you'll use a hammer, level, saw, drill, and so on. You use the tools you need in the order you need them to get the job done.

When you use *Your Money, Your Goals*, the tool or tools you use will depend on the issue you're addressing. You will be equipped with tools to help understand peoples' goals and provide them with specific information and tools they need at that moment in their lives. That is the way *Your Money, Your Goals* can help build empowerment and self-determination.

Cultural and emotional influences on financial decision making

Financial empowerment can connect traditions of stewardship and sustainability to financial decisions.

Your Money, Your Goals includes information for users about the cultural and emotional influences on financial decision making. This discussion can take on even more importance in Native communities where traditional community values may seem to conflict with some approaches to financial management.

For example, the U.S. financial system rewards and penalizes *individuals* based on their personal financial decisions, choices, and missteps, especially when it comes to the extension and use of credit. This may clash with a traditional Native American value of viewing assets and resources as shared or communal. This may also conflict with the value of helping one's immediate and extended family with financial resources whenever called upon to do so—the value summed up in the understanding that “whatever is mine is yours.”

But in the U.S. financial system, financial decisions, no matter their intention, ultimately have individual consequences. For example, if someone helps a family member pay her rent, it may leave him without enough money to cover the monthly payment for his car or truck. While this does not mean the person will immediately lose his vehicle, it may mean a negative entry on his credit report. Once accurate negative entries are on a person's credit report, securing other services, credit, rental housing, or, in some states, insurance, may be more difficult and may cost more. It can even affect a person's ability to get a job.

Within some Native Communities, it may be helpful to describe money as a resource to *steward*, like the land or water and all that grows and lives there. When taken care of, it can provide security and other important resources for individuals,

families, and the community as a whole. Financial empowerment information and tools can help everyone in the community learn to better steward this resource. When someone is empowered to steward their own financial resources, they may be in a better position to help family and community members, too.

Native Communities have traditions of living in sustainable balance with their surroundings—a value and skill admired by cultures throughout the world. To achieve sustainable balance, people think of the long term when deciding how much of a resource to consume today. This concept is also relevant to financial empowerment. When applied to money, the concept of saving reflects a sustainable balance between the needs of today and the needs of tomorrow.

When financial topics are approached with cultural awareness that conveys respect for mutual support and reciprocity, the process of financial empowerment can take root. When community members learn to more effectively navigate and use financial systems, they can also teach and help others in the community gain this knowledge and develop these skills. They may be able to contribute their time and resources more readily because they have taken care of their individual and family financial needs and obligations.

For many people, and particularly in Native Communities, money is not an end in itself. It's a means to meeting a need, fulfilling a responsibility, or building for a future you've envisioned. It is a resource that can provide for community and family needs today and security and stability for the months and years ahead. If it is well-stewarded, it can also provide the foundation for generations to come.

Using *Your Money, Your Goals* in Native Communities

Your Money, Your Goals can be used in one-on-one or group settings to provide financial empowerment information and tools for anyone in the community.

There are two audiences for *Your Money, Your Goals*:

- Case managers, frontline staff, and volunteers in tribal social services or other government agencies who want to help financially empower the people they serve or strengthen their own financial skills, and
- Community members that may want or need financial empowerment information, skill-building opportunities, and tools.

This guide—*Your Money, Your Goals: Focus on Native Communities*—complements the *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit. You can use this guide as a primary resource for working with Native communities and supplement it with the full *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit when you need additional information and tools.

The *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit begins with an introduction. This introduction is for you—the frontline staff members, volunteers, or other individuals who provide services to Native communities. This information will provide you with a better understanding of the goals of financial empowerment and can help you prepare to use the toolkit.

After the introduction, the *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit has nine content modules. This guide aligns with the nine modules in the toolkit. It describes each module and provides additional information and specific tools that may be useful for Native communities. It also includes a new module on financial empowerment and elders. The content modules are:

- Module 1: Setting Goals
- Module 2: Saving
- Module 3: Tracking Income and Benefits
- Module 4: Paying Bills
- Module 5: Getting through the Month
- Module 6: Dealing with Debt
- Module 7: Understanding Credit Reports and Scores
- Module 8: Choosing Financial Products and Services
- Module 9: Protecting your Money

Additionally in this guide

- Module 10: Financial Empowerment and Elders

Your Money, Your Goals in one-on-one or group settings

The CFPB designed *Your Money, Your Goals* to be used in one-on-one settings or in meetings with families. For example, *Your Money, Your Goals* can support:

- A tribal social service staff member providing case management to individuals in the community.
- An elder mentoring a young adult in the community.
- A Native Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) staff member providing additional financial information and skill building to a prospective small business owner.
- A financial coach helping a community member reach her goals.

Using the toolkit in a one-on-one setting allows staff and volunteers in tribal and community organizations to target the information and tools based on the specific needs of each person or family. Using Tool 1: My Money Picture in Introduction Part 2 can help you understand the needs of each person and figure out which information and tools are the right starting points. *Your Money, Your Goals* also includes tips for starting the money conversation.

Your Money, Your Goals can also be used with small groups or as part of training. You may be able to use the toolkit in a group-based setting at:

- Community or organizational meetings
- Brown bag lunches or a lunch-and-learn series
- Other community training events
- Tribal gatherings

Finally, for communities that already provide financial education workshops, *Your Money, Your Goals* may be a complementary resource. The toolkit can be used to deliver additional training or help translate concepts learned in other financial education training programs to their own specific situations.

To help you with small group classes or providing training to staff and volunteers, you can use the *Your Money, Your Goals* training PowerPoint slide deck. Participatory activities are included for each module to help make group sessions or training dynamic, engaging, and effective.

Integrating *Your Money, Your Goals*

The CFPB created *Your Money, Your Goals* to be integrated into existing services, not to be an add-on program. This means that staff and community volunteers trained to use the toolkit will find ways to introduce financial empowerment into the work they are already doing with clients and community members.

The strongest integration strategies start with the end user in mind:

1. Who will use the toolkit? Who will they use the toolkit with?
2. How will they use the toolkit?
3. What outcomes do you want to achieve through the use of the toolkit? (Outcomes are results that bring about changes or benefits.)
4. What content in the toolkit is most important to achieving these outcomes?

Thinking through these questions will help you and your organization in finding the most strategic points of integration for *Your Money, Your Goals*. Case workers who begin utilizing *Your Money, Your Goals* materials in their work with clients may increase their confidence to talk about finances and consumer protection. As conversations about financial capability become a routine part of working with clients, over time frontline staff will build their own capacity to provide these services in your community.

Getting support for *Your Money, Your Goals* in your community

By observing organizations that are using *Your Money, Your Goals*, the CFPB has identified factors that lead to success. One key factor is having a high-level of buy-in from community and tribal leaders.

Each community and organization is unique. You and your organization know the leadership structure and how decisions are made and implemented. As you invest time to discuss the benefits of financial empowerment and using *Your Money, Your Goals* with your community leaders, you can work to develop a plan with them and build consensus around integrating financial empowerment into your work.

Implementing *Your Money, Your Goals* in Native Communities

If you decide that you want to implement *Your Money, Your Goals* in your community, the first step will be getting the toolkit and the supplemental guides at consumerfinance.gov/your-money-your-goals.

The toolkit is a free, downloadable PDF file, which is available in English and Spanish. The **Implementation guide** and **Creating a referral** guide are also downloadable PDF files. If you will be training other people in your community to use the toolkit, you can download the PowerPoint training presentation. Simply click on the links on this page of the CFPB's website and save them to your computer or print them.

You can also order hardcopy toolkits free of charge online at promotions.usa.gov/cfpbfinemp.html. Within four to five weeks, your toolkits will come shrink-wrapped, hole-punched, but not bound. You can supply your own large-size binder clips or 1.5-inch binders for the toolkits¹.

Once you have the resources you need to implement *Your Money, Your Goals*, consider the following steps to bring the use of the toolkit to your community.

Identify a trainer and provide *Your Money, Your Goals* materials

Find a trainer or trainers to facilitate workshops for the staff members and volunteers of tribal organizations that serve your community. Ideally, the trainer will have some experience providing financial education.

¹ For questions regarding how to order toolkits or access materials, contact the *Your Money, Your Goals* team at YourMoneyYourGoals@consumerfinance.gov.

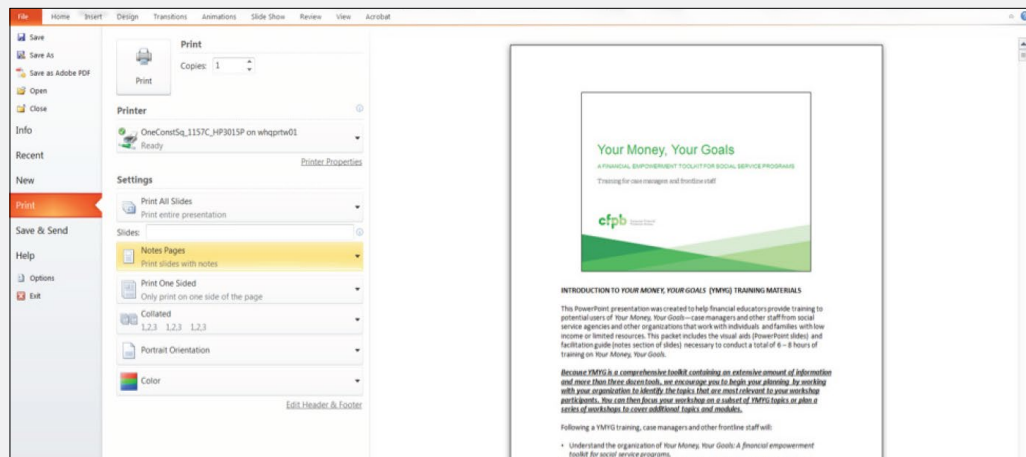
The trainers will need a copy of *Your Money, Your Goals* and the PowerPoint slide deck. The PowerPoint deck includes both slides containing the visual aids for the training and complete training instructions. You'll find these instructions for the trainer in the notes section of the deck. The facilitator instructions include everything the trainer will need to plan for and facilitate the training, including:

- Set up instructions including visual aids, training props, and other important notes.
- Instructions for group activities.
- Question prompts for facilitated discussions.
- Answers to exercises that are a part of the training.
- Scripted narrative to provide clear and concise definitions and summaries.

Printing the training PowerPoint slide deck

To print out the training PowerPoint slide deck, be sure to select the PPT file on the *Your Money, Your Goals* webpage. Do not select the PDF file.

If you are printing this out for yourself (if you are the trainer) or for the trainer, make sure you select either the "Notes Page" under the "View" command or select "Notes" in the print function when asked what you want to print.



You may also want to provide the trainer with the Implementation Guide. It includes steps to help trainers think through planning a training workshop. It also includes tips to gain leadership buy-in. Its “Creating a referral guide” section includes information and tools to develop a financial empowerment resource and referral guide that staff and volunteers can use to connect the people they serve to additional financial empowerment services. These services may include certified nonprofit credit counselors, independent loan specialists, free tax assistance sites sponsored by the IRS, and other financial educators.

You will also want to provide this supplemental guide—*Focus on Native Communities*—to the trainer since it provides content and additional tools for Native Communities that should be included in the training.

Learn and personalize the materials

As a trainer prepares to deliver the *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit training to frontline staff, it can be helpful to consider:

- Using the tools within the toolkit in advance to become familiar with how they work.
- Adding familiar examples and stories to further illustrate and make the concepts covered locally and culturally relevant. Storytelling can be an especially effective way to connect community members to the topics in *Your Money, Your Goals*. While there is one section in the training that explicitly uses storytelling (as an introduction to student loan debt in Module 6), your trainer can share or invite participants in the training to share stories related to information and tools within each module.
- Modifying the training slide deck to make it more culturally appropriate. Consider adding pictures or images that are meaningful in the community².
- Developing an agenda that reflects community preferences, priorities, and needs. If you were to deliver all the material that’s included in the training, it would take a full eight hours. By the time you include breaks and lunch, this would require a full day or day and a half of training. It’s often not possible for people to take that much time out of their schedules to attend training. Organizations have found many ways to organize *Your Money, Your Goals* training:
 - In a series of lunch-and-learns
 - In two or three half-day sessions
 - In a series of evening sessions
 - During an all-day session on a weekend

2 If you make any additional changes to the content of the training deck other than adding images that add meaning for your community, please remove the CFPB’s logo and the CFPB footer from all of the slides.

Before designing your training, consider what is most important to those who will be trained. Perhaps they only want or need training on four of the modules. Use the **Implementation Guide's Training Planning Tool**³ to help develop a clear plan and agenda for the training.

Get the equipment, supplies, and space needed to host a training

The notes section on the training deck's first slide includes a list of equipment and supplies that you may need for your training. This is a guide, not a list of requirements.

General supplies

These basic supplies are used in most *Your Money, Your Goals* trainings:

- A training space (more information on room set up follows)
- Computer
- LCD projector
- Projection screen or wall
- Small table for projector and computer
- Extension cords if needed
- Easel
- Flip chart pad
- Tape
- Markers for facilitator and participants
- Copies of the toolkit for each participant
- Copies of resource and referral list (use the special guide on Creating a referral guide to develop this resource for the training)

Supplies needed for specific exercises

Depending on which exercises you choose for your training, you might also need:

- Large self-adhesive notes (4" x 6" or 5" x 8")
- Prepared flip charts for group exercises
- Envelopes with role play activity roles for groups of 3 and copies of notes sheets for the observer
- Copies of slides that are used for specific exercises

³ *Your Money, Your Goals: An Implementation Guide* can be found at files.consumerfinance.gov/f/201504_cfpb_ymyg_implementation-guide.pdf.

Training assessments

Some organizations choose to use pre- and post-training assessments. These surveys can help your organization track the number of people you have trained and understand its impact on participants. If you would like to use CFPB-developed surveys, they can be downloaded at consumerfinance.gov/your-money-your-goals.

Room set up

Room set up will depend on the space you are able to secure for the training. Ideally, participants will be seated in groups of four to seven around tables so they can work in teams or small groups. If at all possible, avoid theater-style seating or arrangements that do not include a table for participants to work on. The training is meant to encourage small group work and be highly participative and interactive.

Saving on supplies

Getting creative on meeting the needs of your training can help you minimize costs.

For example: What can you do instead of using flip charts?

- Use a chalkboard or whiteboard.
- Use white board cling. This is a roll of whiteboard-like paper that is reusable when you use dry erase markers. The material itself clings to most walls that are not covered with fabric.
- Project a blank PowerPoint slide on the screen and type in responses to brainstorming type activities.
- Make a set of flip charts that are reusable. Laminate prepared flip charts and use dry erase markers on them. This becomes a one-time expense that also reduces paper waste.
- Use paper and tape instead of post-it notes.

Create a budget

To help you plan for a training of 25 people, use this basic budget:

Item	Cost	Notes
Training location	\$0	Use donated space in tribal offices or community rooms
LCD and computer	\$0	Use organizational equipment or borrow it from an organization that has one. LCD Projectors can cost anywhere from \$80 to over \$1,500
Easel	\$0	Borrow or do not use
Flip chart pad	\$50-\$75 for two pads	This will last for 4 - 6 trainings; see options for avoiding use of flip chart paper
Tape	\$6 - \$8/roll	A roll of blue painter's tape will last for 10 or more trainings
Markers	\$24-\$30	36 markers will last for 10 or more trainings
Large self-adhesive notes	\$10	Pack of three; these will last for up to 3 trainings
Copies of slides for group activities	\$2.70 total (Assuming \$.05 per copy and 25 participants)	This will vary based on topics chosen and number of participants. See the instructions for the slides to copy on slide 1 of the training PowerPoint deck.
Toolkits	Order: \$0 Photocopy: \$12.20/ toolkit (244 pages)	You can order free copies of the toolkit at: promotions.usa.gov/cfpbfinemp.html Assume a 4-6 week delivery timeframe. The rate for photocopying assumes \$.05/page cost.
Binder clips	\$12	3 boxes of 12 large binder clips at \$4/box.
Total estimated costs per training workshop	\$97 to \$130 not including the cost of photocopying the toolkits	Many of these items will last for multiple trainings. This can reduce the cost per workshop to \$24-\$32.





MODULE 1

Setting Goals

Turn your hopes, wants, and dreams into reality by setting and achieving goals.

At a glance in the toolkit

This module can help you create a plan to fulfill your dreams by learning how to set, adjust, and reach your short-term and long-term goals.

-  **Setting SMART goals**
-  **Putting goals into action**
-  **Planning for life events and large purchases**
-  **Revising your goals**

Additionally in this guide

-  **Using values to set goals**

Overview

Everyone has a different idea of the future they want to build. What do you want to accomplish in the near future? What do you want for yourself and your family in the long term? These ideas of your future are your hopes, wants, and dreams.

But they don't just happen on their own. Accomplishing your dreams means thinking about the money you need to help make them come true.

It's also important to think about your values, the things that are meaningful to you and your family. Your values help shape how you prioritize what you do with your time, energy, and even money. If your goals support your values, you'll be more likely to prioritize them, which gives you a greater chance of accomplishing them.

Setting goals along the way is a good strategy to help you achieve your dreams. Some goals may take a few weeks or months to reach, like saving money to buy gifts for the holidays or buying a new mattress. These are short-term goals. Others may take many months or even years to reach, like paying off a large debt. These are long-term goals.

Focus on Native communities

Setting goals is a foundation for building greater self-determination. When you set goals about those things in your life that are most important to you, your family, and your community, they provide direction for how to use your energy and resources, including your money. Because goals are often based on values, this guide includes a tool to help people in your community reflect on those things that are most important to them.

This module can help you discuss the importance of goal setting with members of your community and provide tools to help them understand the value and process of setting goals.

The information in this module also provides tools to help you discuss anticipating and planning for life events and large purchases. Life events are circumstances that many people experience as part of the circle of life, from birth to death. Some examples are getting a driver's license and first job, getting the Individual Indian Money (IIM)⁴ or "18-money," graduating from high school and possibly a job training program or college, getting married, having children, dealing with the death of a family member, and retiring from work.

Large purchases are those things people generally buy once or a few times in their lives that generally require more money than is available from disposable income. Examples include automobiles, homes, major appliances, equipment for enterprises or traditional livelihoods, traditional or cultural dress, or major home repairs. Often these large purchases or life events are interwoven with people's goals.

⁴ IIM (Individual Indian Money) accounts are held in trust and are managed by the Office of the Special Trustee within the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Using the tools

YOUR MONEY, YOUR GOALS TOOLKIT

- Use **“Setting SMART goals”** to identify goals that will help you plan for and attain the things that matter most to you
- Use **“Putting goals into action”** to create a plan to achieve your goals
- Use **“Planning for life events and large purchases”** to help you develop a plan to pay for things like a big celebration, a car, or your child’s college tuition
- Use the **“Revising goals”** handout to update or revise goals as needed

FOCUS ON NATIVE COMMUNITIES

- Consider **“Using values to set goals”** to supplement these tools. You may find that it can help the people you serve develop financial goals that reflect their personal, community, and cultural values.

Using values to set goals

Values provide a foundation for your goals. Understanding the values that are most important to you can help you steward your resources in ways that uphold them.

Values are the things that people consider most important in their lives. They can be individual principles or shared beliefs within a community or culture. Depending on the individual you are working with, values may be an appropriate place to begin the financial empowerment discussion. A reflection on traditional values may make the information and tools on goal-setting and related topics in Module 1 feel more relevant.

What to do

- **Think about your community's values.** Understanding how traditional and community values influence your decisions can help you understand what's behind your money decisions.
- **Identify the five values that are most important to you.** Did any of them surprise you?
- **List your goals.** Do you think they match up with the values you identified?

A step further

After you've written down your goal, convert it to an actionable goal with the "Setting SMART goals" and "Putting goals into action" tools in the *Your Money, Your Goals* toolkit.

To access a dynamic and fillable version of this tool, visit: consumerfinance.gov/practitioner-resources/your-money-your-goals/companion-guides.



Make sure your goals reflect your priorities by **Using values to set goals**

1. Think about your community's values and how they influence your goals.
2. Consider your personal values and how they relate to your goals and influence the ways you use your resources.

What are some traditional values shared by the members of your community?

How do these traditional values influence you?

How do these traditional values influence your goals?

Use the following tool to identify the top five values most important to you. Rank them in order of most important, from 1 to 5. Put a "1" by the value that is most important to you, a "2" by the value that is the next most important, and so on.

Comfortable life	Inner harmony
Courage	Leisure time
Culture and traditions	Living in harmony with nature
Family and clan	Professional achievement
Financial security	Respect for and from others
Freedom	Self-determination
Happiness	Self-respect
Health	Social recognition or status
Independence	

Looking at community values can provide insight into those forces that most affect decision-making. Looking at your personal values can provide insight into how you use your personal resources and money.

**What were your top five values? Did these surprise you?
What do these values say about you?**

What are your goals?

Do your goals reflect these values?

How do you think these values affect the way you manage your financial resources?





MODULE 2

Saving

Saving on a regular basis can help you make progress toward achieving your goals and better handle unexpected expenses when they come up.

At a glance in the toolkit

This module can help you create a savings plan with weekly targets to help you reach your goals.

-  Savings plan
-  Saving and asset limits
-  Finding a place for savings
-  Saving at tax time

Additionally in this guide

-  Saving and asset limits in Native communities

Overview

Savings is money you set aside today to use in the future. It could be for something you need in the next few months or even years from now.

People save for many reasons:

- Unexpected expenses and emergencies
- A bill they know will be due every few months, like car insurance
- Annual expenses like children’s school supplies
- To pay for their own goals, like a new TV, appliances, assistive devices, a car, a home, or retirement

Focus on Native communities

Traditionally, Native Communities lived in sustainable balance with their environment. They only hunted or harvested what was needed to live for today so that resources would continue to be available in the future.

Saving money is based on the same principle: using the amount you need to live for today, but setting aside some money so it is available in the future. Living for today and saving for the future are compatible values—it’s about balancing your resources.

For example, for community members whose work is seasonal, setting aside income today to cover the months when there is little or no work ensures sustainability within their household.

People in your community may avoid saving for fear of losing benefits—tribal, state, or federal benefits. Because savings are an asset, the relationship between asset limits and benefits is addressed in this module.

There are various kinds of per capita payments that members of Native Communities may receive. Some of these payments, *but not all*, can be excluded as income, a resource, or an asset when determining your eligibility for a federal assistance program. These programs include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, *Supplemental Security Income*, *housing assistance programs administered by Housing and Urban Development*, or the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Qualification for government benefits varies by program. Individuals seeking to receive benefits under them should review the qualifications carefully to determine their entitlement. There are also special federal laws that specify how certain payments are treated for purposes of eligibility for federally-assisted programs. For example:

- Payments from income of lands held in trust or from an eligible tribal trust account: The first \$2,000 you receive from these types of payments in a given year cannot be counted as income⁵.
- Payments from legal settlements with the U.S. government, such as the *Cobell v.*

5 Pub. L. No. 93-134 as amended by 97-458, 98-64 & 103-6625, 25 U.S.C. § 1408

Salazar settlement, cannot be counted.⁶ However, federal assistance programs administered by the Social Security Administration⁷ and Housing and Urban Development⁸, limit how long these payments are excluded from being considered income or a resource for the purposes of eligibility to one year.

If you receive payments like these, it is important to make sure you keep good records of the payments, where they came from, and when you receive them. It will be important for you to show where your income comes from if you are planning to claim that the income should not be counted as a resource or asset when applying for a federal assistance program.

Using the tools

YOUR MONEY, YOUR GOALS TOOLKIT

- Use **“Savings plan”** to build a weekly savings target that will help you accomplish your goals
- Use **“Saving and asset limits”** to get a clear picture of how much you can save while still maintaining your public benefits
- Use **“Find a place for savings”** to pick a place that’s right for you to keep your savings
- Review the **“Saving at tax time”** handout for tips on how to prioritize saving when you get your tax refund

FOCUS ON NATIVE COMMUNITIES

- Complete **“Saving and asset limits in Native communities”** with information specific to limits for tribal benefits.

⁶ Claims Resolution Act of 2010, Pub. L. No. 111-291, 42 U.S.C. § 1305

⁷ SSA, TN114 (10-11), <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps10/poms.nsf/lnx/0500830852>

⁸ Claims Resolutions Act of 2010, Pub. L. No. 111-291; see also HUD Notice PIH2013-30, 2, <portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=pih2013-30.pdf>.

Saving and asset limits in Native communities

If you receive public or tribal benefits there can be limits on how much you can have in assets before the benefit is cut off. It's important to understand these limits to make sure your savings goals don't affect the benefits you receive or are applying for.

Assets are things you own that have value. Your money in a savings or checking account is an asset. A car, home, business inventory, and land are also assets.

Each program has different rules about what counts as an asset and the total value of your assets allowed to qualify for assistance. For some programs, these rules are the same regardless of where you live. For others, each state or tribe determines its own rules.

In general, your liquid assets (like cash or money in savings or checking accounts) are counted as assets. In some states, if the value of your car exceeds a certain amount, anything over that amount may be counted as an asset as well.

What to do

You can add this worksheet to the "**Saving and asset limits**" tool in Module 2 of *Your Money, Your Goals*.

- **Identify which public or tribal benefits the person you're working with currently receives** or may be applying for in the near future.
- Use the websites and the "Additional Resources" provided to **figure out the specific asset limit for each program** and write it on the tool.
- If you regularly work with people who receive public benefits, **consider completing this tool in advance**. Make copies and review it with the people you serve.

To access a dynamic and fillable version of this tool, visit: consumerfinance.gov/practitioner-resources/your-money-your-goals/companion-guides.



Learn how **Saving and asset limits in Native communities** can affect your benefits

1. Select the programs that you're enrolled in or plan to apply for in the future.
2. Add the name of the contacts for your tribe's programs. If you don't have this information, use the websites in the "**Additional resources**" section to find out.
3. Using the websites in the "**Additional resources**" section, review the asset limit for each program.

Benefits and asset limits list for your community

Benefit	Contacts for tribal benefit programs	Information about asset limits specific to your tribe or community
Food programs		
TANF - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families		
Public housing		
LIHEAP - Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program		
Indian health services		

Benefit	Contacts for tribal benefit programs	Information about asset limits specific to your tribe or community
Other tribal benefit:		
Other tribal benefit:		

Additional resources:

- To get specific information about the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) in your community, visit: fns.usda.gov/fdd/food-distribution-contacts
- To find out more about your state or tribal TANF program, visit: acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/help
- For a list of tribal TANF program contacts, visit: acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/resource/tribal-tanf-program-contacts
- To find your regional office for the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Office of Native Programs, visit: portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/ih/codetalk/tribalhousing#OSD
- For a list of tribal LIHEAP program contacts, visit: acf.hhs.gov/programs/ocs/liheap-tribal-contact-listing
- To find Indian Health Services in your community, visit: ihs.gov




MODULE 3

Tracking Income and Benefits


You have to know what's coming in before you can plan for what's being spent. Tracking the money and benefits you receive is the first step in creating a budget that works for you.

At a glance in the toolkit

This module can help you track the income you're earning and any public benefits you're receiving to better budget your money. It also helps you understand things like deductions and garnishment, which affect how much money you bring home.

-  **Income and benefits tracker**
-  **Choosing how to get paid**
-  **Increasing income and benefits**

Additionally in this guide

-  **Making the most of the IIM**

Overview

Income is the money you receive from part-time or full-time work, self-employment, and investments. You use income to pay for the things you need and want or can save it to spend toward one of your goals. Money can also come from things like tax refunds, gifts, and inheritances, which can also be spent or saved like income.

Focus on Native communities

While many of your community members may earn income from jobs, businesses they own and operate, or traditional livelihoods, they may also receive income from dividends

distributed by the tribal government or money from trust accounts. This money may come from tribal enterprises including gaming, the sale or lease of land and other natural resources owned by the tribe, or because of legal settlements to the tribe.

Called “per capita payments,” these may be distributed in several ways:

- On a regular basis (once per month, two times a year, or annually)
- Periodically
- All at one time (commonly called windfall payments)

As noted in information about savings, some kinds of per capita payments, but not all, can be excluded as income, a resource, or an asset when determining your eligibility for a federal assistance program. These programs include Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Supplemental Security Income, housing assistance programs administered by Housing and Urban Development, or the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

Qualification for government benefits varies by program. Individuals seeking to receive benefits under them should review the qualifications carefully to determine their entitlement. There are also special federal laws that specify how certain payments are treated for purposes of eligibility for federally-assisted programs. For example:

- Payments from income of lands held in trust or from an eligible tribal trust account: The first \$2,000 you receive from these types of payments in a given year cannot be counted as income.⁹
- Payments from legal settlements with the U.S. government, such as the Cobell v. Salazar settlement, cannot be counted.¹⁰ However, federal assistance programs administered by the Social Security Administration¹¹ and Housing and Urban Development¹² limit how long these payments are excluded from being considered income or a resource for the purposes of eligibility to one year.
- If you receive payments like these, it is important to make sure you keep good

9 Pub. L. No. 93-134 as amended by 97-458, 98-64 & 103-6625, 25 U.S.C. § 1408

10 Claims Resolution Act of 2010, Pub. L. No. 111-291, 42 U.S.C. § 1305

11 SSA, TN114 (10-11), <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps10/poms.nsf/lnx/0500830852>

12 Claims Resolutions Act of 2010, Pub. L. No. 111-291; see also HUD Notice PIH2013-30, 2, portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=pih2013-30.pdf.

records of the payments, where they came from, and when you receive them, It will be important for you to show where your income comes from if you are planning to claim that the income should not be counted as a resource or asset when applying for a federal assistance program.

Per capita payments may also be deposited into Individual Indian Money (IIM) accounts and held in trust. These accounts are managed by the Office of the Special Trustee within the U.S. Department of the Interior.¹³

For minors, IIM accounts may continue to grow until the minor turns 18 years old or is legally emancipated. In some communities, this is called “18-money.” Young people anticipate its arrival, but some do not plan for how they will use it when they receive it. The “Making the most of the IIM” tool is designed to help you help young people consider how to make the most of their 18-money.

Module 3 in *Your Money, Your Goals* covers managing and tracking income and benefits. These tribal sources of income may present both opportunities and challenges when planning for the use of income. For example, regular per capita payments may be an advantage to someone whose other income is seasonal or irregular (does not come in at a predictable time or in a predictable amount).

Planning with irregular or annual per capita payments may be harder. But without a plan, individuals may miss the chance to build and grow family and community resources for the future. A plan can help someone use their irregular or annual per capita payments to pay down debt, save for emergencies, help family members, or save for the months when there is little or no income. All of these activities build family and community wealth and security. These funds can also be used to invest in assets that can help create financial security and wealth, such as reliable transportation, additional education or training, tools to engage in traditional livelihoods, or business enterprises.

This module also covers wage garnishment. If someone has unpaid debts, and the creditor sues them for the debt and wins, the creditor may seek to collect this debt by garnishing (commonly called “attaching”) their wages. There are federal limits on how much can be garnished from your wages. States and tribal governments may have established laws further limiting garnishment. Tribal payments may be eligible for garnishment if you owe money and have been sued by a creditor. For more information on garnishment, see Module 3 in *Your Money, Your Goals*.

13 See [bia.gov/cs/groups/mywcsp/documents/collection/idc010124.pdf](https://www.bia.gov/cs/groups/mywcsp/documents/collection/idc010124.pdf)

Using the tools

YOUR MONEY, YOUR GOALS TOOLKIT

- Complete the **“Income and benefits tracker”** to see how much money you’re bringing home each month
- Review **“Choosing how to get paid”** to see the pros and cons of different payment methods and pick what works best for you
- Use **“Increasing income and benefits”** to think about ways you can boost the amount of money you’re making

FOCUS ON NATIVE COMMUNITIES

- Use **“Making the most of the IIM”** to help young adults and others who are receiving large payments consider how they can build a plan to spend or save that reflects their values and helps achieve their goals

Making the most of the IIM

A lump sum payment can help you reach your goals if you make a plan for how to use it. This tool can help you build a plan that's based on the things that are most important to you.

Getting a lump sum of money is exciting. People receiving their IIM or 18-money may want to consider ways to maximize the value of this money through planning.

You can give the tool to someone to complete or you can use the questions and sections within the tool as the basis for a dialogue.

What to do

Use this tool with anyone that is going to receive their IIM or 18-money. Provide them the opportunity to think through the pros and cons of spending and saving this money and how their use of this lump sum relates to their values and goals.

- **Start with the facts about the IIM payment.** How much will you receive? When will you receive it? Will it be received all at one or in a series of payments?
- **Think about the pros and cons of spending or saving the money.** Review these pros and cons and make an initial decision about what to do with the money.
- **List your goals** using the SMART goals framework.
- **Think about whether your plan for your IIM will help you achieve your goals.** Consider whether your plan could make it easier or harder to reach your short-term and long-term goals.

To access a dynamic and fillable version of this tool, visit: consumerfinance.gov/practitioner-resources/your-money-your-goals/companion-guides.



Plan for your future by **Making the most of the IIM**

1. Answer the questions about your IIM or 18-money.
2. Evaluate the pros and cons of spending or saving the money you're receiving.
3. List your goals and consider how your plan for your money will help you reach them.

How much do you think you are getting from your IIM or 18-money account?

When will you get it?

How will you get your IIM or 18-money? (Check one.)

One-time or windfall payment?

Regular recurring payments?

Spending your IIM

List below the pros and cons you see of spending all the money you receive. Consider these questions when making your list.

- What if you spent all of the IIM money you are about to receive right away?
- What would you buy with it?
- How would that affect your future?
- How would that affect members of your family?

PROS	CONS

Saving your IIM

List below the pros and cons you see of saving some or all the money you receive. Consider these questions when making your list.

- What if you saved some or all of the IIM money you are about to receive?
- How would that affect your future?
- How would that affect members of your family?

PROS	CONS

Evaluating your choice

Review your pro and con lists. How do you plan to use your IIM?

List three of your goals

Don't forget to make your goals SMART (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ble to be achieved, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-bound.) *Your Money, Your Goals* has tools that can help you do this.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Things to think about or discuss with someone

- Does your planned use of your IIM help you achieve your goals?
- Does your planned use of your IIM help make a better future for yourself? Your family? Your community?
- Will your planned use of your IIM bring you short-term happiness or long-term happiness?
- Will your planned use of your IIM help you earn money in the future?
- Will your family, friends, and community elders respect your choice?






MODULE 4

Paying Bills

Learn to organize, track, and prioritize your bills and expenses.

At a glance in the toolkit

This module can help you better understand where your money is going and learn how to reduce expenses and pay bills more efficiently.

-  **Spending Tracker**
-  **Bill calendar**
-  **Choosing how to pay bills**
-  **Cutting expenses**
-  **Prioritizing bills**

Overview

“To stay financially healthy, you should spend less than you earn.” This simple rule may work for many people, but it isn’t very helpful if you can’t afford to pay all of your bills and living expenses.

For some, balancing personal priorities and family expectations can sometimes be a challenge. And if your work is seasonal or irregular, you may be able to cover everything when you’re working, but struggle to cover expenses in the months or weeks when you’re not.

Focus on Native communities

How people use their money is often a reflection of their individual, family, and cultural values. For example, you may prioritize using some of your resources to provide family members with assistance or invest in helping your community.

When it comes to your personal financial resources, the U.S. financial system will reward or penalize you based on whether you pay your bills on time and repay

debt according to the agreement, regardless of the contributions you have made to your family or community. For example, your history of using credit is captured and reflected in your credit reports and credit scores. And having a poor credit history and scores could result in your paying more for loans and credit cards and, for example, paying higher utility and cell phone plan deposits. This could leave you with less money to spend on things you value more highly.

Making decisions about how to use your financial resources is ultimately about balance—balancing your individual and family needs for shelter, food, and clothing with your personal or cultural values that may emphasize sharing with others.

Using the tools

YOUR MONEY, YOUR GOALS TOOLKIT

- Use the “**Spending tracker**” to get a clear picture of where you’re using your money and financial resources
- Use the “**Bill calendar**” to visually organize all of your bills in a monthly calendar
- Use “**Choosing how to pay bills**” to learn about all of the payment options you have for paying your bills
- Use “**Cutting expenses**” to brainstorm ideas for cutting expenses from your budget
- Use “**Prioritizing bills and spending**” to make decisions about which bills to pay when you can’t make ends meet




MODULE 5

Getting through the Month


Tracking when your money comes in and goes out can help you understand if you'll have enough each week or month.

At a glance in the toolkit

This module helps you understand your cash flow by looking at how money flows into and out of your household. It also provides suggestions for how to improve your cash flow if you're having trouble making ends meet.

-  **Creating a cash flow budget**
-  **Improving cash flow**
-  **Adjusting your cash flow**

Additionally in this guide

-  **Annual planner**

Overview

When it comes to money, timing matters. If the timing of your income doesn't match the timing of your expenses, you may come up short without planning in advance. That's why monthly budgets sometimes don't work out from week to week.

Focus on Native communities

Planning the use and conservation of resources is something Native Communities have practiced for thousands of years. For example, some communities may have

hunted in the late winter and early spring. They stopped hunting during the spring birthing season and switched to preparations for planting crops. Such careful planning and follow through enabled herds to repopulate, so that they would be a sustainable resource in the future. It also ensured there were crops to harvest in the late summer and early fall.

Cash flow budgeting is an extension of this concept of planning. Instead of natural resources, however, it is planning with financial resources and income.

Module 5 provides information and tools to help people make plans to get through the month—pay for all of their living expenses, bills, financial obligations, and other uses of income or financial resources, including saving and sharing with family and the community.

The toolkit uses a cash flow budget approach that looks at the timing of income and expenses from week to week. People sometimes experience shortfalls because of when income or financial resources are received and when their bills are due. These week-by-week shortfalls can be missed in a static monthly budget.

Using the tools

YOUR MONEY, YOUR GOALS TOOLKIT

- Complete “**Creating a cash flow budget**” to see how your income and expenses line up
- Use “**Improving cash flow**” to learn about strategies and habits you can change to help your cash flow
- Use “**Adjusting your cash flow**” to find expenses that you can move or reduce to make sure your weekly cash flow is positive

FOCUS ON NATIVE COMMUNITIES

- Use the “**Annual planner**” as a supplement to help people plan if their sources and uses of income and other financial resources are annual, twice a year, or sporadic.

Annual planner

It can be hard to build a budget when your income and expenses vary widely from month to month. This tool can help you plan how to use your resources to support your family and your community.

Using a cash flow budget can be difficult for people who have sporadic or seasonal income and periodic expenses. The annual planning tool can be used to help someone think through when their income may come in and when they may have irregular expenses.

What to do

- **Think about your income over the course of a year.** For example, is it higher in the summer and low in the winter?
- **Think about your expenses during the year.** Do you spend more during holidays for gifts and food or always help grandchildren with back-to-school clothes? Are there bills you pay annually, twice a year, or quarterly or twice a year?
- After you've considered the timing of your income and expenses, **complete the annual planning calendar.** Consider putting it in a place you'll see it as a reminder of when sporadic expenses are coming due.

To access a dynamic and fillable version of this tool, visit: consumerfinance.gov/practitioner-resources/your-money-your-goals/companion-guides.



Track seasonal income and expenses with the **Annual planner**

1. Fill in the chart with the amount and timing of income and lump-sum payments you receive during the year.
2. Fill in the second page with the amount and timing of expenses that occur once, twice, or several times a year.
3. Use your information about income and expenses to project monthly totals for a year.

Sources of income	Amount expected	Date and how often it's received
Do you get per capita or other tribal payments?		
Do you generally receive a large tax refund, including the Earned Income Tax Credit or other tax credits?		
Do you get any tribal or public benefits that are received one-time or a few times per year?		
Do you earn income from seasonal work?		
Do you earn income sporadically by working on contract or through some other kind of work?		
Are there any other sources of income or benefits that you receive one-time or a few times per year?		
Other:		

Sources of spending	Typical cost	Anticipated date
Do you have children attending school and expenses related to school like back-to-school shopping after summer break?		
Do you generally attend reunions, powwows, or other gatherings?		
Do you anticipate making any investments in regalia or other items needed for reunions, powwows, traditional celebrations, or gatherings including giveaways?		
Do you regularly provide support for family or community members?		
Do you generally celebrate or observe any religious or cultural holidays?		
Do you owe and make quarterly self-employment or other income tax payments?		
Do you pay for insurance on a quarterly, semi-annual, or annual basis?		
Do you pay property, vehicle, or other taxes on a quarterly, semi-annual, or annual basis?		
Do you travel to see family (besides reunions, powwows, or gathering) or go on vacations?		
Do you anticipate making any major purchases like gardening supplies, home repairs, or appliances?		
Other:		

Use your answers from the sources of income and spending charts to summarize your projections for each month. You will be able to use this each month as you create a cash flow budget to ensure you don't miss sources and uses of income and financial resources that are not regular.

Month	Estimated sources of income	Estimated spending
January		
February		
March		
April		
May		
June		
July		
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		








MODULE 6

Dealing with Debt

Learn about ways to tackle your debt to help you feel less overwhelmed. The more you know about how debt works, the easier it will be to make choices that are right for you.

At a glance in the toolkit

This module will help you get a picture of what you owe, get a handle on your payments, and cut down on stress from growing debt.

-  **Debt log**
-  **Debt-to-income calculator**
-  **Debt action plan**
-  **Comparing auto loans**
-  **Repaying student loans**
-  **When debt collectors call**
-  **Avoiding medical debt**

Overview

What is debt? Debt is money you owe to another person or business. Whether you took out a loan, used a credit card, or got behind on a bill payment, that's debt. Debt can be hard to face when it feels like a barrier to your goals, but it's important to remember that there are resources you can use to help you take control of your debt. Even small steps toward paying down debt can make a big difference in making it feel more manageable.

Focus on Native communities

For Native Communities that embrace a perspective based on living in harmony with the world and people around you having or even discussing debt may create a conflict. This is because debt is about borrowing from the future and may upset that harmony. Debt obligates future resources to cover decisions made today.

Debt, however, is a current reality in many communities—communities may have debt due to money raised for improvements that benefit everyone, businesses may have debt to enable them to expand. Families and individuals may have debt related to buying or repairing a home, buying a car or truck, starting a business, getting their children education and training after high school, or emergency expenses.

Understanding debt, how to manage it, and how to reduce and get rid of it, are important components of financial empowerment.

Using the tools

YOUR MONEY, YOUR GOALS TOOLKIT

- Complete the **“Debt log”** to gain an understanding of all the debt you owe
- Use the **“Debt-to-income calculator”** to discover how much stress debt is putting on your budget
- Fill out the **“Debt action plan”** to find a strategy for paying down your debt that works for you
- Bring **“Comparing auto loans”** with you when you shop for an auto loan to help find the best deal
- Use **“Repaying student loans”** to understand what repayment plans are available to you
- Review **“When debt collectors call”** if you’re having a problem with debt collection to prepare yourself the next time a debt collector contacts you
- Review the **“Avoiding medical debt”** handout if you’re dealing with high medical bills to learn about ways to handle medical debt





MODULE 7

Understanding Credit Reports and Scores

Building a positive credit history (which is measured through credit reports and scores) can help you when getting a job or approval for housing or a loan.

At a glance in the toolkit

This module explains the importance of credit reports and scores and reviews ways to improve and maintain your credit history.

-  **Requesting your free credit reports**
-  **Reviewing your credit reports**
-  **Disputing errors on your credit reports**
-  **Getting and keeping a good credit history**

Overview

The concept of “credit” can be complicated. People sometimes confuse the words debt and credit because they both have to do with borrowing money.

A simplified way to tell them apart is to think of credit as the ability to borrow money and repay it later, while debt is the money that you have to repay when you’ve used credit. You can have credit available to use without having debt. For example, you may have a credit card that is paid off—meaning you have credit available to use but don’t owe any debt.

When you take out a credit card or other loan, you create (or add to) your credit history. Sometimes when people talk about their financial situation, they say they have “good credit” or “bad credit.” This usually refers to their credit history.

Credit reporting companies gather information from your credit history into a credit

report. A credit report may show some of your bill payment history, along with some public record information and a record of how often you have applied for credit.

A credit report may also show how much available credit you have, how much of your available credit you're using, whether you have made your payments on time, and whether debt collectors have reported that they're attempting to collect debt that you owe.

The information in your credit report is used to create credit scores. Many lenders use credit scores to decide how much money they can lend you and how much interest to charge. In general, the higher your credit score, the better the loan terms may be.

Focus on Native communities

Financial issues can be tough to talk about in some Native Communities because so many concepts that relate to them may, on their surface, seem individualistic. This can appear to conflict with values of sharing resources with family, clan, and community. In no situation is this clearer than when discussing credit reports and scores.

In cultures that strongly value sharing and family and community needs, a key to understanding credit reports and scores is that a person's financial actions ultimately have individual consequences. For example, not paying an auto loan so you can help a family member with a financial need may result in having your car repossessed. And this could have other consequences including not being able to get to your job, which lessens your ability to help family members in the future. Finally, not paying your auto loan payment could mean a negative entry on your credit report and a significant drop in your credit scores. This may create other challenges like not being able to secure a better paying job or buy a home or other asset.

Module 7 provides information and tools to help people get, review, and improve their credit report and scores.

Using the tools

YOUR MONEY, YOUR GOALS TOOLKIT

- Complete "**Requesting your free credit reports**" to plan when you're going to order your free annual credit reports
- Complete "**Reviewing your credit reports**" to make sure all the information in them is correct and up to date
- Review the "**Disputing errors on your credit reports**" handout to learn how you can dispute mistakes on your reports
- Use "**Getting and keeping a good credit history**" to pick strategies you can implement to improve your credit scores
- Complete all four items described above to make sure the information on your credit reports is correct








MODULE 8

Choosing Financial Products and Services

Learning about financial products and services and how they work can help you better manage your money, improve your credit scores, and save for your goals.

At a glance in the toolkit

This module helps you understand the different kinds of financial products and services available, how they might meet your needs, and how you can make the most of them. It also explains some of your rights and responsibilities when dealing with certain types of financial products and services.

-  **Finding financial products and services**
-  **Comparing financial service providers**
-  **Opening a checking or savings account**
-  **Avoiding checking account fees**
-  **Evaluating your prepaid or payroll card**
-  **Knowing your prepaid card rights**
-  **Sending money abroad**

Overview

Financial products and services are the tools you use to store and access money, make payments and purchases, send money to other people or businesses, and pay for purchases over time. They include things like checking and savings accounts; prepaid cards; payroll cards; government benefits and EBT cards; credit cards; money transfers; bill payment services; and loans.

One important key to finding the right financial product or service is first thinking about the reason you need one. You may want a secure place to put the money you're saving for your goals, unexpected expenses, or emergencies. You may want a convenient way to pay your bills or to use your mobile phone to access your financial accounts. You may be looking for a loan to buy a car. Or you may want to repair or build your credit history to improve your credit scores.

Focus on Native communities

Historically, many Native Communities lacked access to financial products, services, and providers. While access is not yet universal, access to a number of financial products and services has improved because of:

- Native Community Development Financial Institutions (Native CDFIs) including credit unions and community banks.
- Increased awareness among banks and credit unions to better serve Native Communities.
- The emergence of online bank and credit union products and services.

Many types of financial products and services can help people protect their money and financial resources, better manage their money, more efficiently pay for their current living expenses, and set aside money for their goals or for future generations.

Protecting what you have as a community ensures it will be there not only today, but also tomorrow and in future generations.

Your Money, Your Goals takes a financial empowerment approach to financial products and services. Rather than directing people to a particular type of provider or service, this module starts with an assessment of your needs or priorities and—based on those needs—helps you choose from among your options. With this information, you can make the choices that are best for you and your family.

Using the tools

YOUR MONEY, YOUR GOALS TOOLKIT

- Use "**Finding financial products and services**" to find out about products that may meet your needs and learn about how they work and where to get them
- Use "**Comparing financial service providers**" to compare companies that offer the products or services you need and choose the one that's right for you
- Complete "**Opening a checking or savings account**" to make sure you have all the documentation and answers you need

- Review “**Avoiding checking account fees**” to choose strategies you can use to lower or eliminate fees
- Complete “**Evaluating your prepaid or payroll card**” to make sure you understand the details and fees associated with using the card
- Review the “**Knowing your prepaid card rights**” handout before you buy or use a prepaid card so you know about your rights and responsibilities
- Review the “**Sending money abroad**” handout to learn about your rights and responsibilities when sending money to another country





MODULE 9

Protecting your Money

Learn about ways you can protect yourself and your money with practical tips and information about your financial rights and responsibilities.

At a glance in the toolkit

This module can help you understand your rights and responsibilities within the financial marketplace, how to protect yourself from identity theft and fraud, and what you can do if you've been affected by identity theft, fraud, or a problem with a financial product or service.

-  **Protecting your identity**
-  **How to handle identity theft**
-  **Spotting red flags**
-  **Submitting a complaint**

Overview

When you're an empowered consumer, you understand your rights and responsibilities. There are many laws that protect you when it comes to financial products and services. It's the Bureau's job to enforce these laws and handle consumers' complaints about financial products and services.

Knowing what your rights are can help prevent you from being taken advantage of during financial negotiations and transactions. And understanding your obligations can help you avoid late fees or problems with an account.

You are also the first line of defense when it comes to protecting your financial information from fraud or theft. There are things you can do to be proactive about keeping your information safe.

Focus on Native communities

One important job of tribal leaders is to protect the assets that belong to the tribe. These assets could be land or the natural resources that come from the land. These assets could be tribal enterprises built by community members, from banks to grocery stores to consulting firms to casinos. They could be money that comes from settlements with the U.S. government or corporations. They could also be community traditions including ceremonies, traditional ways of life, and language.

Protecting what you have as a community ensures it will be there not only for today, but also for tomorrow and future generations.

When it comes to protecting your money and financial resources, there are laws that give you rights. *Module 9: Protecting your money* provides an introduction to some of these laws as well as an overview of how to protect your identity and how to determine that a financial product or service may not be a good deal for you.

Importantly, this module also covers how to submit a complaint to the CFPB. If someone feels uncomfortable submitting a complaint, another individual can submit a complaint on her behalf, with her consent.

When someone submits a complaint, the CFPB forwards it to the company and work to get a response. After the CFPB forwards a complaint, the company has 15 days to respond to you and the CFPB. Companies are expected to close all but the most complicated complaints within 60 days. You'll be able to review the response and give feedback to the CFPB. If it finds that another agency would be better able to assist, CFPB will forward your complaint and let you know.

The CFPB also shares complaint data with state and federal agencies that oversee financial products and services, and we publish a database of non-personal complaint information so the public knows what kinds of complaints we receive and how companies respond. These complaints also help identify areas of attention for our supervisory/enforcement actions.

Using the tools

YOUR MONEY, YOUR GOALS TOOLKIT




- Read the "**Protecting your identity**" handout for ways to guard yourself against identity theft
- Review the "**How to handle identity theft**" handout to learn what steps to take if your identity has been stolen
- Study the "**Spotting red flags**" handout to see some of the warning signs that a sales deal might be a scam
- Learn how "**Submitting a complaint**" can help you if you've had a problem with a financial services company

MODULE 10

Financial Empowerment and Elders

The risks people may face change throughout their lives. Elders can be especially vulnerable because they may have income, assets, or other resources accumulated from working throughout their lives.

At a glance in this guide

-  Identifying elder financial exploitation
-  Getting help for elder financial exploitation
-  Preventing elder financial exploitation

Overview

The traditional value of respect for elders is not a guarantee against elder financial exploitation.¹⁴ But that value can be used to encourage community members to learn about all types of elder abuse and empower everyone to take action to prevent and report these crimes.

This module is new to *Your Money, Your Goals* and was created specifically for Native Communities. It covers financial empowerment and elders and discusses how to protect elders from financial abuse and exploitation. The tools in this module will help you identify elder financial abuse and exploitation, get help if you suspect it is occurring, and prevent these crimes from happening to elders in your community.

¹⁴ National Indian Council on Aging. Preventing and Responding to Abuse in Indian Country, June 2004. See ncea.acl.gov/Resources/WEAAD.aspx#Abuse.

Focus on Native communities

Elder financial exploitation is the illegal or improper use of an older person's funds, property or assets. This can occur through fraud or scams, or when caregivers, family members, or others improperly use an elder's financial resources.

The following circumstances or conditions can make an elder a target of financial exploitation:¹⁵

- Having regular income and accumulated assets.
- Being trusting and polite.
- Having cognitive impairments that affect financial decision-making and judgment.
- Being dependent on a family member, caregiver, or another person who may pressure the elder.
- Being lonely and socially isolated.
- Being vulnerable due to grief from the loss of a spouse, family member, friend, or pet.
- Being reluctant to report exploitation by a family member, caregiver, or someone they depend on.
- Being dependent on support from a family member or caregiver to remain independent.
- Receiving care from a person with substance abuse, gambling or financial problems, or mental health issues.
- Fearing retaliation by the exploiter.
- Being unfamiliar with managing financial matters.
- Being unprepared for retirement and the potential loss of financial decision-making capacity.

While cons and scams perpetrated by strangers are commonly highlighted as risks for elders, too often family members and people that provide services or care to elders commit these offenses.

15 The following list is from Money Smart for Older Adults. See files.consumerfinance.gov/f/201306_cfpb_msoa-participant-guide.pdf

Strategies for building safer communities

Some of these actions may take weeks, months, or longer to fully implement and will likely require many follow-up steps. You may want to consider organizing a group or task force to develop and implement a plan for your community.

Goal	First steps	Follow-up actions
<p>Identify existing resources in your community.</p>	<p>Talk to tribal government and social services to find out what resources are available to help elders who are victims of financial exploitation.</p>	<p>Work to identify key players or interested partners in and outside of tribal government who share your concerns and desire for community change. Ask if they will help set up a Tribal Elder Protection Team to work to develop a coordinated community response.</p>
<p>Work with your tribal police force.</p>	<p>Meet with your tribal police force. Sometimes, police officers do not understand the importance of documenting identity theft and other individual financial crimes. Consider meeting with the leadership of your tribal police force to discuss community concerns about elder financial exploitation (including identity theft).</p>	<p>Once you've built a relationship with partners in the tribal police force, invite them to join you in your efforts. Here are some ideas you can discuss with your law enforcement partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training for responders ▪ Agency collaboration in the development of a Tribal Elder Protection Team ▪ Creating a protocol for response to crimes against elders.
<p>Raise awareness of elder financial exploitation.</p>	<p>Encourage all community members to take care of elders by watching out for financial exploitation including fraud, scams, and other crimes that target elders.</p>	<p>Use community and cultural events to educate community members about the risks to elders and the signs that financial abuse or exploitation may have occurred.</p> <p>Order copies of <i>MoneySmart for Older Adults, Managing someone else's money</i>, and other free publications at promotions.usa.gov/cfpbpubs.html.</p>

For more information on this topic, see Money Smart for Older Adults. This fully scripted curriculum includes an Instructor Guide, Resource Guide and a PowerPoint presentation. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and the CFPB jointly developed this information. It is available free-of-charge at: [fdic.gov/consumers/consumer/moneysmart/olderadult.html](https://www.fdic.gov/consumers/consumer/moneysmart/olderadult.html).

Using the tools

- Use “**Identifying elder financial exploitation**” to help people identify financial exploitation
- Use the “**Getting help for elder financial exploitation**” handout to help people take action if they suspect exploitation may have occurred to an elder in your community.
- Use “**Preventing elder financial exploitation**” to help people help elders in their community prevent financial exploitation from taking place.

Identifying elder financial exploitation

Elders are a valued and respected community resource. If you are aware of the signs of elder financial exploitation you can help protect vulnerable elders in your community.

Identifying elder financial exploitation may be difficult. Elders may be reluctant to say anything about what is happening to them out of embarrassment and shame, fear of reprisal, dependency on the perpetrator of the offense, or fear of further straining a family relationship. Family members or close friends may be unaware of the situation with the elder. Or they may be the individuals financially exploiting the elders.

Use this checklist to educate community members about elder financial exploitation. It can be used one-on-one if someone expresses concern about an elder and his or her living conditions, care, or financial situation. Responses to the questions included in the checklist can help you or the individual you are working with get assistance.

What to do

- **Review the warning signs** of elder financial exploitation.
- **Record the status of the warning sign.** Is the sign of potential financial exploitation suspected? Has it been observed, or has it been reported to authorities?

A step further

If someone believes that elder financial exploitation is occurring, share the “Getting help for elder financial exploitation” tool with them.

Explain that they don’t have to prove that abuse is taking place to report it. It’s up to the authorities to investigate the report and, if necessary, take action.

To access a dynamic and fillable version of this tool, visit: consumerfinance.gov/practitioner-resources/your-money-your-goals/companion-guides.



Recognize warning signs by **Identifying elder financial exploitation**

1. Use this checklist to identify warning signs that someone is financially exploiting an elder.
2. Check the box to note if the situation is suspected, if you've observed it taking place, or if it has been reported to tribal authorities.

Check the box if suspected, observed, or reported.

Situation	Suspected	Observed	Reported
The elder's living conditions are below expectations in light of her financial resources.			
Family members are living with the elder, but not assuming financial or maintenance/upkeep responsibilities of the home and/or property.			
A live-in caregiver refuses to leave or to leave the elder alone with visitors.			
Caregivers or family members caring for the elder seem to isolate him from other family members, friends, and community events or gatherings.			
A caregiver refuses to spend the elder's money on necessities for basic care, including expenditures for personal grooming, household upkeep, and appropriate medical care.			
A caregiver receives an unusual level of expensive or frequent gifts paid for with financial resources of the elder.			
The elder transfers title of home or other assets to someone else for no apparent reason.			

Situation	Suspected	Observed	Reported
The elder's personal belongings, important papers, credit cards, or identification documents go missing.			
Changes are made to the elder's will that are unexplainable or made when the elder is ill or otherwise incapacitated.			
Frequent checks are made out to "cash" from the elder's account.			
The caregiver's name is added to the accounts of the elder or the caregiver becomes an authorized user on credit card accounts belonging to the elder.			
Unusual bank or credit card activity is reported.			
Bills go unpaid or overdue when someone else has been charged with paying them for the elder.			
The elder does not know how much income she receives. The caregiver is unwilling to share that information when asked by other family members.			
The elder seems suddenly more fearful and becomes reluctant to talk about topics that were once routine conversations.			
Signatures on checks, legal documents, or other communications do not match the elder's signature.			
The elder takes out a large, unexplained loan or reverse mortgage.			
Unusual information in a tax return is spotted.			



Getting help for elder financial exploitation

- Elder financial exploitation often goes unreported.
- Many people don't know what to do if they suspect elder financial exploitation. These resources can help.
- Remember, you do not need to prove that abuse is occurring to report it. It is up to the professionals to take action if you suspect abuse.

AGING SERVICE PROVIDERS

- Find out if your community has a Tribal Elder Protection Team or similar entity in place. This may be the first place to report suspected financial abuse or exploitation. You may also want to contact your tribal social services office. Ask for adult protective services.
- If you are unsure of the tribal entity that manages eldercare in your community, call the Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116. Trained information specialists are available Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET. You can also search for a local adult protective services agency at eldercare.gov.
- Contacting your local Area Agency on Aging. To locate your local agency, call the Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116 or search at eldercare.gov.
- If you live outside an area covered by a tribal government, contact your community's Adult Protective Services and/or local police.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

- You may want to contact your tribal police force. To locate your tribal police, contact the special agent in charge in your district: bia.gov/bia/ojs/contact-us.
- You can also report financial fraud to your tribal government and/or your state's attorney general office. Use this locator to find the office in your state: naag.org/naag/attorneys-general/whos-my-ag.php.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

- You may feel you need legal assistance to help you, for example, with getting back money or property that was taken or to protect the elder from additional exploitation. If you need legal advice or representation, contact a federally-funded legal assistance program for people 60 and older, known as Title III B legal services programs. Title III B legal services programs can provide legal assistance on issues such as income security, health care, long-term care, nutrition, housing, utilities, protective services, defense of guardianship, abuse, neglect, and age discrimination, as well as financial exploitation.
- Legal assistance in these programs is targeted towards older individuals in social and economic need. Each program has its own priorities and eligibility guidelines regarding case acceptance and areas of representation.

- Legal assistance for seniors may be located within your local legal services program. You can find out about your local legal assistance programs by using:

- Legal Services Corporation legal aid locator at lsc.gov/what-legal-aid/find-legal-aid
- Pine Tree Legal Assistance’s list of legal services links—including Indian legal services—by state at ptla.org/legal-services-links.
- National Indian Legal Services at judicare.org/content.cfm?PageID=52.

CONSUMER COMPLAINTS

- If you’re having a problem with a bank account, credit card, student loan, consumer loan or other financial products or services you can submit a complaint with the CFPB at cfpb.gov/complaint.
- You can report scams, rip offs and unwanted telemarketing through the FTC website: ftccomplaintassistant.gov.

IDENTITY THEFT

- If you suspect that identity theft has occurred, you can report this to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) at ftc.gov/idtheft or by calling 1-877-IDTHEFT (438-4338).
- The FTC has an online toolkit that includes a detailed guide for protecting your information, with instructions and sample letters to help spot and respond to identity theft: Taking Charge: What to Do If Your Identity Is Stolen. You can find it here: consumer.ftc.gov/articles/pdf-0009-taking-charge.pdf.

Preventing elder financial exploitation

The best defense against elder financial exploitation is working together to prevent it.

While it's critical to identify elder financial exploitation and get help when it occurs, it's equally important to take steps to prevent it from happening in the first place.

Preventing elder financial exploitation takes a coordinated community response that includes engaging elders, the people who provide direct services to elders, community leaders, and law enforcement responders.

Use this tool and to start engaging community members in protecting elders. The tool contains both strategies for communities to use and actions for elders and their trusted family members to take. Taking action at both levels will contribute to a safer community for elders.

What to do

- **Identify the steps you can take to prevent elder financial exploitation.** These steps may be different if you are an elder, a family member or caregiver, a community member, or a tribal leader.
- **Check the step when it's completed.**

To access a dynamic and fillable version of this tool, visit: consumerfinance.gov/practitioner-resources/your-money-your-goals/companion-guides.



Identify steps for Preventing elder financial exploitation

1. If you are an elder, identify steps you can take to protect yourself from financial exploitation.
2. If you are a family caregiver or a community member, identify actions you can take to help protect an elder or elders in your community.
3. Check the action when it has been completed.

Actions for elders and their trusted family members

There are many steps elders can take to protect themselves if they act early. The list below includes recommended actions for individual elders, family caregivers and community members who can look out for or care for them. Not every step will apply to every elder or community, but this checklist will get you started in protecting elders from financial abuse and exploitation.

Check when completed

Encourage advance planning for diminished capacity. Provide elders with resources to help them determine how they want to manage their money and property in the event they become unable to do so for themselves. Advance planning may include making a power of attorney or trust.

Help people understand powers of attorney and tailor them to the elder's needs. A power of attorney is a legal document authorizing someone to make decisions about money and property on someone else's behalf. If abused, this power can be used to steal a person's financial assets. Communities and legal professionals can help elders understand that they need be sure to name someone they trust as their agent. It is important to communicate that powers of attorney can include built-in protections. Legal professionals can help people tailor the document to individual needs. For example, in the document, the elder can require the agent to provide an annual accounting of income and expenses to an outside party, such as an attorney or other trusted third party.

Use automatic bill paying. Routine bills can be set up on automatic bill pay from the elder's checking or savings account. Alternatives include paying by check or credit card. All of these methods have the advantage of creating a "paper trail," unlike cash. That way, if there is a problem later, the elder or family or community member who is helping them can see where the money went.

Involve several people. Major financial decisions for elders should be made only after consulting several trusted people, such as relatives, attorneys and financial professionals.

Have checks directly deposited. This reduces the opportunity for theft. However, the funds are still at risk if the abuser is a joint owner on the account.

Communicate with the bank or credit union and review statements. Banks and credit unions are often the first to see questionable financial activity and can alert the elder or a relative. Be sure to review statements from banks, credit unions, credit card providers, and other financial service providers monthly.

Check your credit reports regularly. This is one of the primary ways people discover their identity has been stolen and accounts have been fraudulently set up in their names.

Check references. Anyone hired to provide care—including relatives who are being paid—should be thoroughly screened.

Reduce isolation. It's tougher for a caregiver to commit fraud in a crowd, so the elder should keep in touch with friends and family members. If you live far away from a vulnerable relative, keep in contact with the relative's close friends, and neighbors.

Protect all documents related to identity and financial information. Keep all identification documents, important financial papers, and other information in a safe and secure place. When disposing of anything that has personal or financial information on it, shred it to prevent someone from stealing sensitive information from the trash.

Remember that if it's too good to be true, it probably is. Be aware of the red flags of cons, scams, and other kinds of fraud, such as:

- A stranger asks for a Social Security number, tribal identification card information, bank account numbers, date of birth, or other sensitive private information on the phone or in an email.
- Someone leads elders to believe that other elders or leaders are investing in the opportunity being presented.
- Someone "guarantees" wealth from an investment.
- Someone creates a sense of urgency by stating that there is a limited time to act or a limited number of opportunities.
- Someone is offering a product or service but requires a large upfront payment.
- Someone claims the elder has won a lottery, prize, sweepstakes, or a trip, but requires payment of a fee or taxes to claim the prize.

For more information, service providers can refer to the full “Your Money, Your Goals” toolkit online at cfpb.gov/your-money-your-goals

If you’re having a problem with a bank account, credit card, student loan, consumer loan or other financial products or services you can submit a complaint with the CFPB at cfpb.gov/complaint

For answers to commonly asked questions you might have about other money matters, visit “Ask CFPB” at cfpb.gov/askcfpb

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