

FINANCIAL COACHING TO SUPPORT HOMEOWNERSHIP INITIATIVE: RESULTS AND REFLECTIONS

MARCH 2019







FINANCIAL COACHING TO SUPPORT HOMEOWNERSHIP

As part of the SD Native Homeownership Coalition's efforts to train and support practitioners working to prepare Native families for homeownership, the Coalition designed and implemented a ten-month financial coaching initiative in 2019. Through the initiative, the Coalition conducted a three-day training on financial coaching, and provided follow-up technical assistance, coaching and support for participants.

The financial coaching approach focuses on partnering with a client to create financial goals, move through obstacles, and provide accountability. Through coaching, clients are supported as they shift behaviors and work towards self-determined goals. Around the country, community organizations are using coaching as one strategy in their work to prepare families to become successful homeowners. The coaching approach is fairly new to most homeownership practitioners in Indian Country, who are just starting to understand the approach, and how it can be a tool in working with clients. With the support of Freddie Mac, the Coalition was able to design and implement a "financial coaching to support homeownership" initiative in response to requests from homebuyer practitioners, who indicated that they wanted to learn more about financial coaching and how to integrate it into their homebuyer readiness efforts.



FINANCIAL COACHING TRAINING

The two and a half-day training was held in Rapid City, April 9 – 11, 2019. A total of 15 practitioners attended the training, representing nine organizations. Vickie Oldman and Natasha Shulman of Seven Sisters Community Development Group, LLC, both certified coaches, conducted the training. The culturally relevant coach training curriculum, *Building Native Communities: Financial Coaching with Families* was developed by Seven Sisters in partnership with First Nations Oweesta Corporation.

The learning objectives of the training focused on supporting participants' effort to integrate their financial knowledge with a coaching approach. Through the training, participants would:

- ✧ Understand the foundational principles of financial coaching as well as how and when it can be used to support clients
- ✧ Embrace a coaching presence that encompasses curiosity, compassion, and intuition
- ✧ Develop core coaching skills such as the four levels of listening, asking empowering questions, identifying core values, self-management, visioning, and goal setting
- ✧ Explore financial coaching related tools that will support clients
- ✧ Practice coaching their peers to build and strengthen their coaching skills
- ✧ Discuss integration of coaching into current programs and practices
- ✧ Build commitment, excitement, and confidence

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

BLACK HILLS COMMUNITY LOAN FUND

YANKTON SIOUX TRIBE

CHEYENNE RIVER HOUSING AUTHORITY

FOUR BANDS COMMUNITY FUND

REDCO/TATANKA FUNDS

MAZASKA OWECASO OTIPI FINANCIAL

LAKOTA FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

ONGLALA SIOUX TRIBE PARTNERSHIP
FOR HOUSING

THUNDER VALLEY COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

FOLLOW-UP TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, COACHING, AND SUPPORT

Beyond training, the initiative was designed to provide the follow-up support needed to help ensure that participants could successfully integrate the financial coaching model into their work. Through the follow-up component, participants could request coaching for their own staff, technical assistance on the mechanics of integrating coaching essentials into their work with clients, or “mentor coaching” for existing coaches. Through the mentoring component, participants had the opportunity to receive feedback on and strengthen their own coaching skills, as well as address specific issues that they were experiencing with clients.

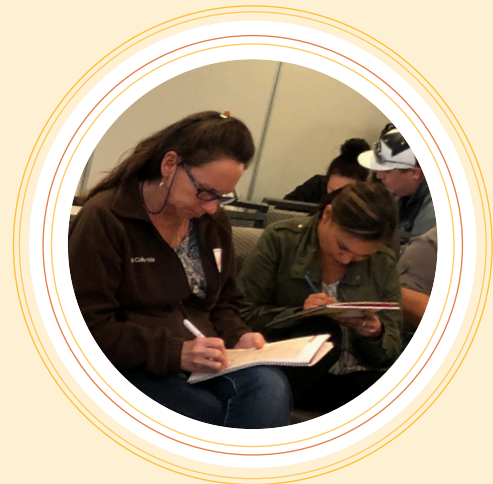
Each of the organizations that completed the training was offered ten hours of follow-up support. Of the nine participating organizations, six requested this follow-up support: Four Bands Community Fund, Lakota Funds, Cheyenne River Housing Authority, Black Hills Community Loan Fund, the Yankton Sioux Tribe, and REDCO (Rosebud Economic Development Corporation). Ultimately, the initiative provided 56.5 hours of follow-up support for these organizations.

Follow-up coaching and TA focused on support for coaches in the following areas:

- ✕ Creating new activities for homebuyer readiness clients
- ✕ Developing self-care plans and practices
- ✕ Strengthening organizational communication
- ✕ Piloting and testing efforts to integrate coaching as a homebuyer readiness program service
- ✕ Developing perspective and understanding of the learning process
- ✕ Navigating hard conversations with leadership

Looking at the impact of the initiative, outcomes of the follow-up coaching support for participants included:

- ✕ Identified strengths and potential areas of growth
- ✕ Created a network beyond their communities
- ✕ Saw an improved return rate with homebuyer readiness clients (using coaching skills)
- ✕ Strengthened their own ability to self-manage (limit advice-giving)
- ✕ Increased understanding of self-leadership
- ✕ Increased self-confidence in using coaching approach





REFLECTIONS: INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS

In reflecting on the training and follow-up coaching and technical assistance, facilitators identified key factors that contributed to the success of the different components. In reflecting on the training component, instructors shared the following ingredients for success:

- ✧ Trainers had conducted multiple trainings with curriculum.
- ✧ The training was based on a strong, culturally-rooted curriculum.
- ✧ Trainers were certified coaches.
- ✧ Training was held in an accessible, in-state location.
- ✧ Training scholarships were provided.

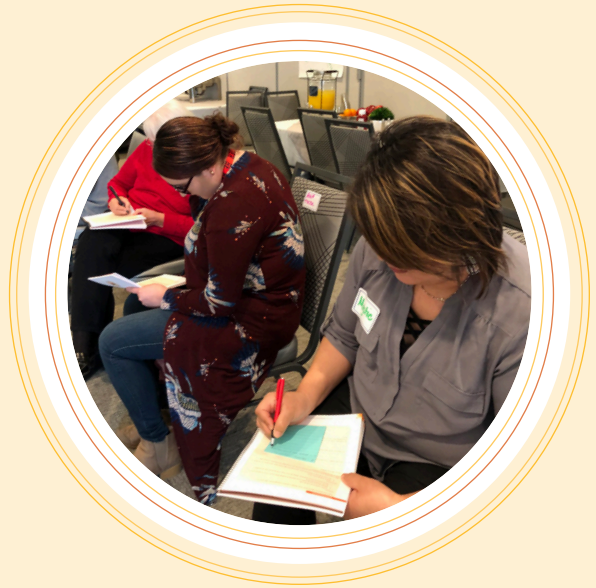
Looking at the follow-up coaching/technical assistance component, facilitators noted the following factors:

- ✧ Facilitators/coaches built strong, trust-based relationships with participants.
- ✧ Participants had a strong interest in learning, self-growth, and support.
- ✧ Participants had attended a number of training sessions on financial coaching, and were familiar with the approach.
- ✧ Participating organizations embraced the coaching approach.
- ✧ Participants are actively practicing financial coaching and committed to the practice.



In looking at the program overall, facilitators shared the following lessons learned:

- ✘ It is critical to have leadership buy-in for and understanding of the coaching approach.
- ✘ At the same time, even if there is leadership buy-in, it is also important to have the buy-in and commitment of staff who will be coaching.
- ✘ To be effective, coaching requires a real investment of time and resources on the part of organizations committed to the approach.
- ✘ Ideally, training and support should be offered to all staff of an organization.
- ✘ It is vital that staff who attend training are those that will be conducting the coaching.
- ✘ Organizations need to be sufficiently mature in order to successfully integrate coaching into their homebuyer readiness programs (with other programs established and a track record).
- ✘ Financial incentives may help support efforts to establish buy-in.
- ✘ Sharing data from the field (how does coaching make a difference?) could help encourage participant buy-in.
- ✘ A screening tool/application (“Are You Ready for Coaching?”) would be helpful in determining whether an organization or participant is a good fit and ready to commit to a coaching initiative.





FINANCIAL COACHING CASE STUDY

Four Bands Community Fund, a Native CDFI on the Cheyenne River Reservation and Coalition member organization, has seen the power of financial coaching in transforming clients' behavior and is committed to the approach. Executive Director Lakota Vogel coaches clients, along with four of her staff members. According to Lakota,

Financial coaching is a mindset. It's changing – who is the lead person in this conversation? It's the client, it's not us. We put the ownership back on the clients, and they've responded really well.

Lakota has explained for Four Bands, seeing clients as whole, resourceful individuals has impacted the clients' financial behavior and the long-term repayment of their organization's loans. As clients become more invested, Four Bands has seen significant drop in delinquency rates, and less arrears. Lakota notes that clients' credit scores have also improved since Four Bands began financial coaching.

Four Bands' staff participated in the Coalition's financial coaching initiative, which they found very valuable. They appreciated the regional training, and the opportunity to come together to learn with other coaches. As an organization committed to coaching, the Coalition's initiative provided important reinforcement for their work.



CONCLUSION

Overall, the Coalition's financial coaching initiative was a success, and an important part of its work to support practitioners' efforts to prepare families for homeownership. A number of Coalition member organizations have embraced financial coaching, recognizing how it can support clients' efforts to achieve their homeownership goals and improve their outcomes, as seen in the case study on the coaching efforts of Four Bands Community Fund. At the same time, the Coalition has learned that coaching requires a true shift on the part of interested organizations, with buy-in on multiple levels, and multiple opportunities for training and exploration.

The Coalition envisions that over time, as more organizations make this shift and incorporate a coaching approach, more families will benefit, and ultimately, achieve their dreams of homeownership. To support this shift moving forward, the Coalition will consider:

- ✧ Providing more trainings
- ✧ Continuing technical assistance and support for organizations working with financial coaching
- ✧ Monitoring coaching success through our evaluation efforts
- ✧ Showcasing coaching best practices
- ✧ Encouraging peer sharing through our Homebuyer Readiness Committee



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