



SunTrust Foundation and
United Way of Greater Atlanta

Partner Listening Sessions

December 2014

Partner Participants

Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs

ClearPoint Credit Counseling

D&E Power

Families First

Georgia Consortium for Personal Financial Literacy

Georgia Youth Opportunities Initiative

Goodwill of North Georgia

i3 Content Company

Jewish Family & Career Services

Operation Hope

SunTrust Bank

SunTrust Foundation

United Way of Greater Atlanta

Urban League of Greater Atlanta

If You Build It, They May Not Come

Several years ago, Khang held a well-paying job. He had several lofty financial goals:

- He wanted to expand his giving
- He wanted to pay for his son's college without borrowing
- He was looking toward his young daughter's future

He knew he would need help achieving his financial goals. He reflected back over the past ten years of how he had used—and wasted—his money. He reviewed his tithe record for the previous four years. And he started paying attention to opportunities to learn how to achieve his goals—through advertisements on TV, through searching online, and through programs offered through his church.

The program offered through his church interested him. He asked others about it, read about it, and discussed it with his girlfriend. The program seemed like the right kind of solution for what he wanted to accomplish. The program was a life changer for Khang.

Khang's story is not unique, but sadly it's not common either.

When it comes to tackling financial goals and overcoming financial crises, we learned that people face a gap between understanding what they need and getting real help that could move them forward. They don't know where to turn. They are easily distracted by the information overload they face. Even our focus group participants did not think first of programs as solutions in their individual situations. They stumbled

upon programs—through friends or family, through their churches, and through online research. Just because you build robust, beneficial financial programs, the people who need them may not find them. They may not pursue them. They may not leverage them.

People still need help accomplishing key jobs—whether they are in financial crisis or are trying to achieve something aspirational with their money. They need you to:

- Offer real help.
- Open their eyes to new opportunities.
- Minimize the obstacles to getting help.

Getting Your Financial Help Program on the Radar

We put our focus group participants through an interesting exercise. Participants were tasked with researching financial programs that could help them in one of three different scenarios:

1. They were overlooked for a better paying job because of a lack of education.
2. They were denied a mortgage because of their credit score.
3. In order to grow their small business, they needed to purchase new equipment, but weren't certain they could qualify for a loan.

“What Would You Do First?”

With the first part of the assignment, we gave them a constraint. We told them to imagine that United Way did not offer a specific program that could help, and then asked how they would first approach finding a solution. Every person started with research—either conducted solo

Methodology



- Two 90-minute focus group sessions
- Eight participants per session who have been through one of the following United Way programs:
 - Financial Education Program
 - Credit Counseling Program
 - Income Stability Program
 - Young Adult Transition Program
 - Small Business Entrepreneur Program
- November 4, 2014
- Atlanta, GA

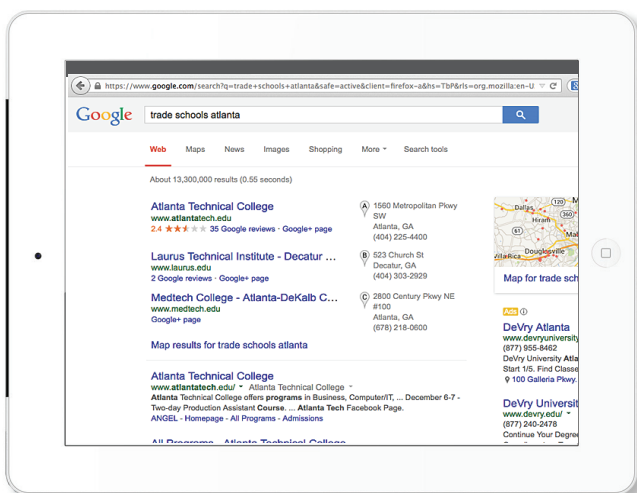
or via reaching out to friends, family or peers. They exhibited striking similarities by assigned scenario:

Education Scenario:

Those assigned the education scenario planned to research local and online schools first. Interestingly, the information they were looking for in this scenario seemed to follow a sequential order:

- Find schools that offered the necessary education
- Determine the amount of time required to complete the education
- Determine the cost
- And finally, determine the grants or scholarships available—through the school first and then through other sources.

They did not view nonprofit programs as a source for the education they were looking for.

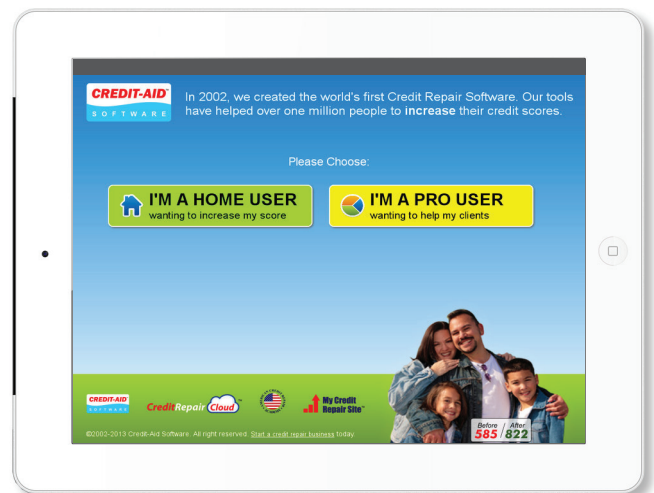


Mortgage Decline/Credit Repair Scenario:

In general, those assigned the credit repair scenario assumed that they could address specific tasks to repair their credit and that they could do most of those tasks on their own, such as:

- Review the credit report
- Identify and address issues
- Pay off delinquent accounts
- Save more money, etc.

If they were uncertain of what the specific tasks were, they planned to either research online or talk to the mortgage officer in the scenario to get the list of tasks. **They did not consider programs or banks as a source for information, but were looking for do-it-yourself solutions.**



Small Business Scenario:

Those assigned the equipment purchase task proved highly ingenious. Most dreamed up solutions beyond paying full price for the equipment, such



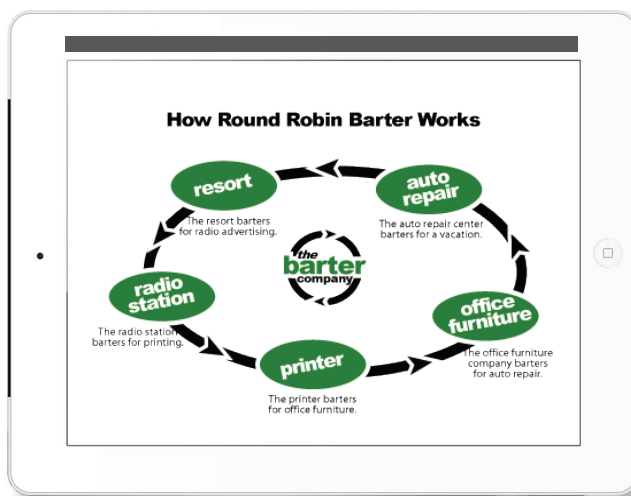
The burning question

Would they find your program through one of their sources or their research?

The sad truth

Quite possibly not! Even if they had experience with a program, they may not assume that a program existed that would address their circumstance or that they would qualify for participation.

as bartering, crowd funding, purchasing secondhand equipment, renting/leasing, and using credit card receipts as collateral. A couple suggested financial programs in the initial round, such as the SBA or another organization which may have a grant or special loan terms for this kind of purchase. **They did not follow a traditional route to financing an equipment purchase.**



“What Did You Find?”

Interestingly, despite all having a history of participating in nonprofit-sponsored programs, only a handful of participants proactively searched for programs to address their assigned scenarios. Instead, they considered sources such as articles, for-profit businesses, and how-to tips. The Education Scenario participants read about schools and educational programs or investigated scholarships, loans and grants. The Small Business Scenario participants seemed most successful in knowing about or stumbling on SBA programs or other local civic programs. However, the Credit Repair participants tended to focus on do-it-yourself solutions provided through articles, software and tips.

Though quite familiar with technology and the Internet, participants were easily distracted from their primary assignment of finding a financial program that could help. In the limited time we gave them, they found related information, but not necessarily financial help programs. Granted, we would not let them jump to phoning United Way to ask for a program, but they also did not seem to make the leap that another organization may offer a program as a solution. An important point to consider is that many expressed that they had not yet found the ideal solution in the short amount of time that we provided, and that they would actually spend as much as a full day, if needed, researching viable solutions. They also showed evidence that they trust much of the information they find on the Internet.



How to Promote Trustworthiness

In general, participants have a lot of trust for nonprofit organizations. But they and the agency partners who observed the listening sessions generated additional ways organizations can indicate trustworthiness through their online presence:

Show Results/Successes

Statistics that show the number of people helped or who have successfully completed the program significantly boost their confidence in an organization's ability to help them.

Testimonials and Stories

From actual participants

Government and Other Nonprofit Endorsements

Accreditation

Interestingly, accreditations

have weight even though they may not know the accrediting authority.

Longevity of Program

A long-standing program gives them confidence that the organization has the experience, expertise and knowhow to help.

Provide Tools to Help or a Plan for Success

Once again, the work validated that when organizations provide tools or plans to get them moving in the right

direction, then their trust in the program grows.

Connection to Community

Evidence that the organization is making a difference in their community resonated with them.

Use Respectful Terminology

They expect to be treated with respect. Use terms, client segment names and program names that convey respect. For example, using "low wealth" rather than "low income" to describe clients shows respect.

Deciding on a Solution

Recognizing and accepting the need for help is a milestone that propels consumers into search mode—all of which is exhausting given the emotion, stress and uncertainty of the situation. Instead of finding relief at this point, they find themselves further burdened by the need to make a decision with either too much or too little information. So, how are they doing it? What does it look like? Is it effective?

Through exercises and the use of devices to engage in searches we were able to ascertain how people went about looking for a program and the type of programs or resources that surfaced and subsequently made their final list. From there, they were asked to choose from the options they had found and share the approach they used to decide.

Telling Their Story

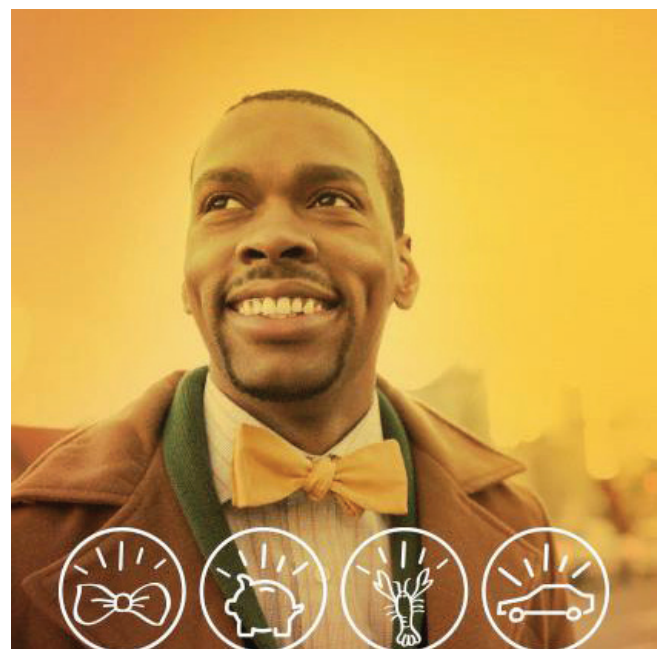
One factor impacting not only the options that surfaced but also their final selection is the way in which they think about and share their story. How emotional is it? To what extent are they fully embracing it? Is it embarrassing to share?

The extent to which they are diagnosing and accepting their own situation directly and significantly impacts how they search, the options that surface and the direction in which they choose

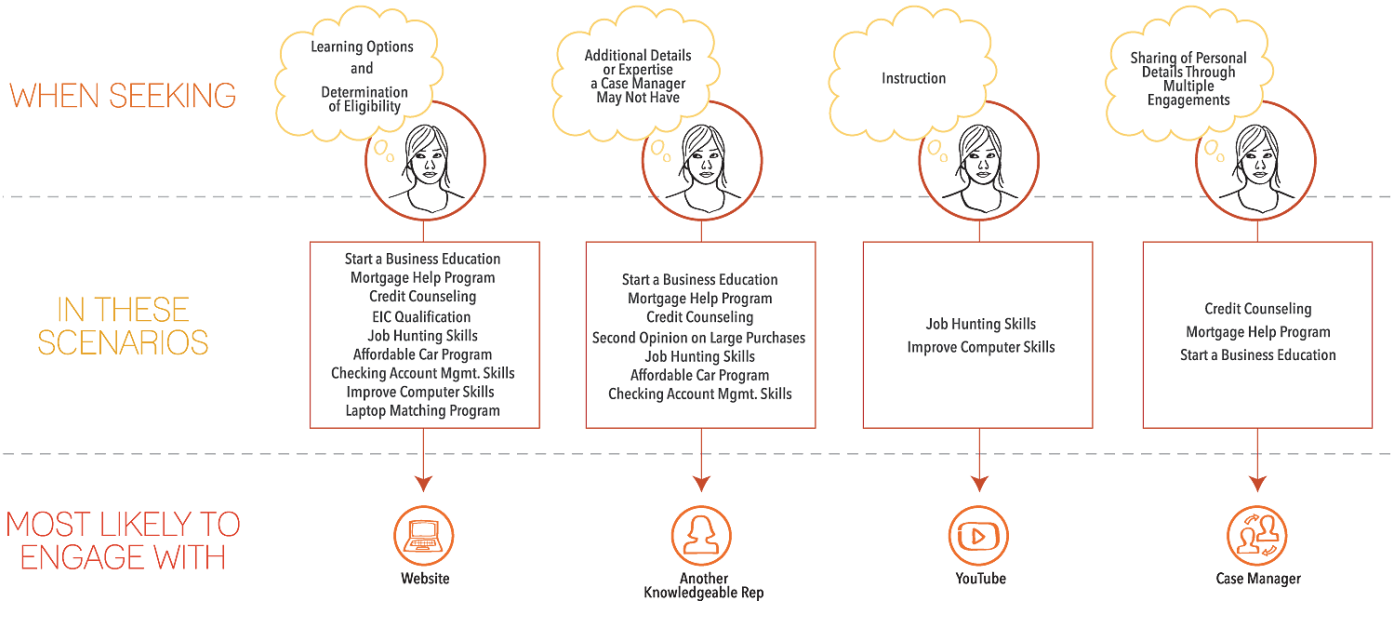
to head. Those who are cognizant of their situation, its impact and how it relates to general standards are far more effective in seeking out options that can help. Sadly, not everyone fell in this category.

One of our participants was frustrated with news that he would receive only a 0.25 cent annual increase at his job. In response he decided to leave and seek out new career options. He looked into a vocational/trade school to broaden his technical knowledge and skill—a logical option at surface level. What he didn't address, however, was his borderline illiteracy, error-ridden spelling and inability to decipher or work with any kind of technological device—all issues certain to undermine his progress again and again.

More often than not, however, our participants shared stories detailing their situation, why they were in that situation and the help they sought.



HOW WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO ENGAGE IN THESE SCENARIOS?



Decision-Making Criteria

As described earlier, regardless of the situation to be addressed, our participants engaged in similar processes and adopted common criteria for evaluating the options that surfaced. They immediately sought out general information regarding certifications, accreditation, guarantees and the number of years the organization, program or resource has been in place and engaged in helping people in this way. In general, they seem to accept that these are indicators of quality, integrity and reliability though very few people exerted any time or effort to understand the details, scope or even meaning behind accreditations, certifications or guarantees. They also spent little to no time trying to

understand the extent to which these things related to their own unique situation.

Once these boxes were checked, however, participants considered and researched additional factors. They searched to see if someone from the organization would be available to walk them through the details of the program and generated questions they would like answered:

- Do I actually qualify?
- What does it take to get started?
- What are the exact terms of involvement?
- What is the fine print I am not seeing?
- What will I have to pay back?
- How likely am I to receive financial support?



The burning question

Are the criteria adopted by these consumers and the approaches they applied to selecting a path resulting in good decisions over the long-term?



The sad truth

Not necessarily. We were left questioning...

- Are government - backed, nonprofit - driven and church - referred programs always the best options? What are they missing by prioritizing these qualities?
- Is their need for instant gratification undermining their overall success in the end? Are they prioritizing speed and ease, in turn passing on options that may require investment and effort upfront but add more value over the long-term?
- Are ads always bad? Is it fair to assume that a site, resource or program that allows and shares ads is bad and a less viable option or addressing their need?



They also engaged in good thoughtful consideration of things such as the balance of time versus effort and quality. A few of our participants recognized the importance of program quality on long-term usefulness and

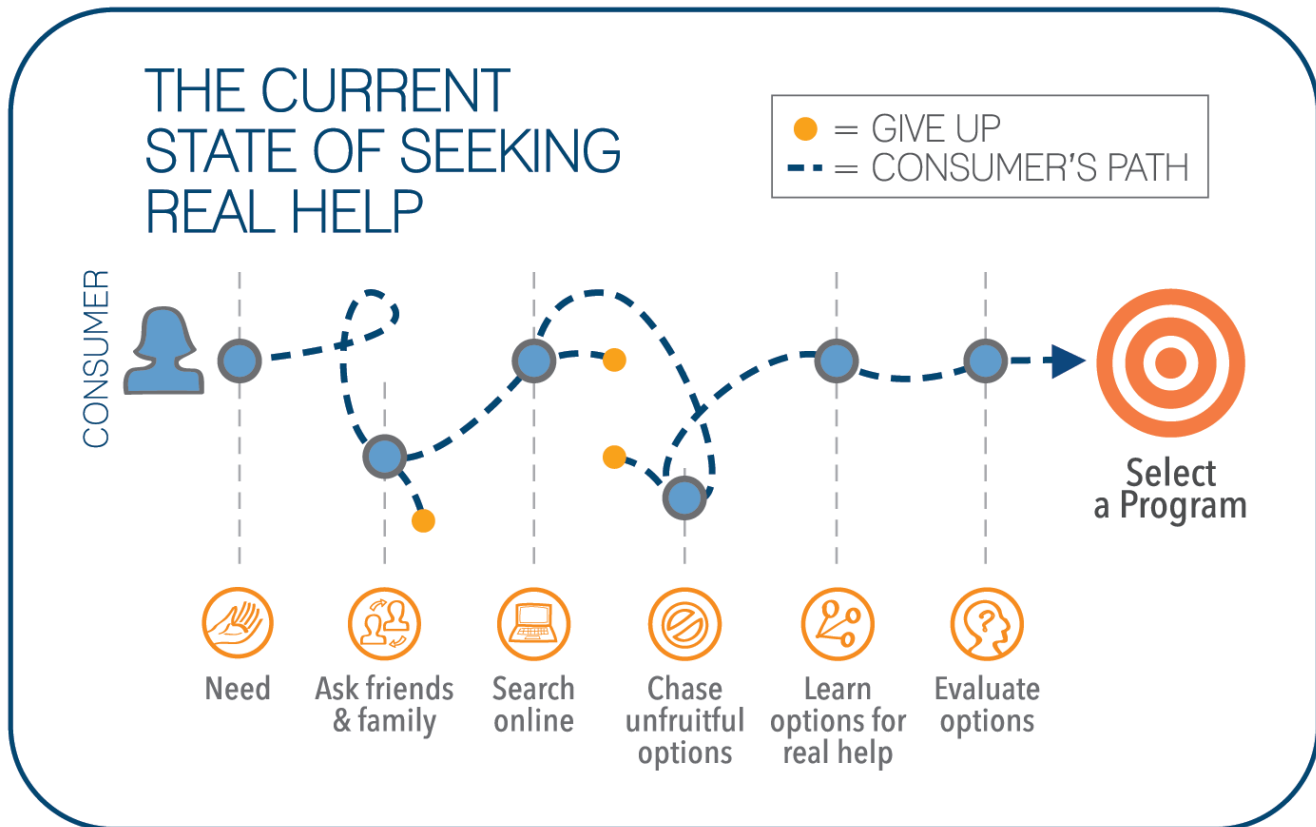
prioritized programs, colleges, trade schools and others that were nationally recognized for quality and positive impact over a period of time. Many more, however, seemed to favor fast, short-term and minimal effort over others that required more of an investment. To this end, they often used these terms in their searches upfront, unquestionably influencing the list of options they were left to choose from. They also ruled out options that had a waiting period before starting or required too much paperwork upfront. This led us to question the extent to which they were simply reinforcing the potential for a repeat cycle—one in which they find themselves only incrementally and temporarily ahead and then again woefully behind and in need of help.

As we pressured them to come to a decision, most of them quickly turned back to looking for quick evidence of effectiveness. They engaged in what appeared to be a scoring-like exercise in which options gained points for:

- Being a nonprofit or government-backed program
- Having an association with or being referred by a church
- Posting testimonials (whether they were read or not)
- Sharing statistics pointing to effectiveness

And lost points for:

- Charging any kind of application fee
- Displaying any kind of advertising during the search process



At a minimum, we were impressed with the resourcefulness of the group. Each and every one of them shared a situation from their past that illustrated strength and bravery in facing and tackling a situation.

They mimicked much of this in our research environment and many were able to find viable options worth pursuing.

We also witnessed approaches that concerned us—such as assumptions and preconceived ideas that were allowed too much power in the decision-

making process or reliance on criteria that may not strongly link to effectiveness in addressing their unique situation.

Mapping the Way Forward

Driven to provide the best possible solution for consumers in need, each organization involved in this work has been laser focused on continually improving their own program. The questions above, however, suggest that improvements to programs could continue to go unnoticed if we don't first address the criteria used to evaluate the

program in the first place. What if we did more to improve the effectiveness of their journey from “I have a need” to “I have an answer”? Addressing this might mean coming together and channeling our efforts to improving their decision-making, regardless of what program they choose in the end. We might:

- Share proven decision-making criteria linked to specific needs.
- Highlight the importance of mutual fit. This isn’t just about finding an answer. It is about finding a fit between each person, his/her situation and circumstances and the nuances of the option being considered.
- Educate on the trade-offs of speed vs. quality, ease vs. effort, and fees vs. free. For instance, why might some options require paperwork upfront, and why might that actually be beneficial to the participant?
- Show up where they are. Managing our own sites and the information available is critical and clearly a priority today. But few of them are starting there. Are we impacting them as effectively as we could before they visit our sites?

Few of our participants went into their situations with a clear, big picture view of what they needed from whom with what impact. They crave a view—like a Google Map (astutely shared by one of the groups in our workshop)—

Coupons as Investments



Though her husband has a well-paying job, Kim regularly uses coupons to save \$200-400

per week for her family. She says, “I started couponing as a lifestyle to help save my family money so that I can have more money to save for my retirement.” She volunteers at United Way and encourages clients to use coupons.

Friends ask her why she still uses coupons with her husband’s income and she responds,

“Coupons are not just for poor people. Why pay full price?” Kim’s mentality is not uncommon. According to Coupons.org, households with incomes of \$100,000 or more are twice as likely to use coupons as those earning less than \$35,000. They also report college degree holders are also twice as likely to use coupons as those who did not graduate from high school. I

The potential benefits for coupon usage are dramatic. Inmar reports that in 2012 coupon distribution

had the potential to save coupon redeemers \$1535 per year, but actual coupon redemption averaged only \$10.75 per person per year². Kim proves that coupon enthusiasts can save significantly more and tries to teach clients of United Way how to be enthusiasts. All households can benefit.

Sources:

1. CNBC report “Well-Off, Educated and Tech Savvy: The New Couponer,” by Katie Little, 28 Feb 2012
2. 2013 Coupon Trends, Inmar, Inc., March 2013, p. 5

Key Takeaways

Program-savvy consumers and business owners who did indeed make their way to an organization's site to learn the details of what you offer, appreciated:

- That they could easily understand how the program benefits participants. They want to see that the participants emerge from the program in a better state.
- Detail that indicates how the program works. Knowing what is required upfront and as the program progresses is helpful when they are considering a program.
- A clear understanding of when loans or grants are involved. They want to see the potential amount of money that could be lent or granted and the associated terms.
- Detail on how to qualify to understand whether it's worth pursuing.
- Specifics on program costs or activities they need to do.



that shows the starting point, the end point and the options along the way. They want to know the advantages and disadvantages of prioritizing one route over another. What if they modify one leg of the overall route? What does that do to the time required, bumps in the road or overall effectiveness? Lacking this clear and comprehensive view, they turn to what they know: past experience, preconceived ideas, surface-level certifications/accreditations, and speed and ease of the application process in order to make important decisions now that impact their careers, financial stability, family structures and health later.

What is clear from our work together, however, is that the path to creating and maintaining a program

that makes a positive difference in consumers' lives starts well before the program has even surfaced on their radar. Consumers are seeking to educate themselves first through quick reads—articles, tips, others' stories—and checking with friends and trusted sources. While some people in need will eventually make their way to a particular program or site, they get there much quicker if one of these quick reads or sources references the program. And, the sad truth is that some will never get there at all. All of this begs for an organized and unified effort focused on first ensuring that we are meeting people where they are and showing up where they are seeking help. The more we know about each other's programs the better—it isn't sufficient to be focused only on our own organizations and the help we offer. There is a need for us to act as a network focused uniformly on helping people find the help they need. Churches, current participants, government entities can all assist in sharing the word. The content you host on your site can be repurposed in the form of articles and quick reads that surface in Google searches and in the body of other forms of reference.



“There is a need for us to act as a network focused uniformly on helping people find the help they need. Churches, current participants, government entities can all assist in sharing the word.”

Next—collaboratively—we have an opportunity to affect the way in which consumers evaluate our programs and select the paths they choose. Without accurate guidance on how to compare and evaluate program options, they resort to their own assumptions and past experience. In some cases, these criteria have produced successful outcomes for participants, but in too many cases they are either taking a chance or even missing options that are best suited to their needs.

The time we spent with consumers listening to their stories, watching how they approached problems to solve and viewing their exercises has shed light on how they search program specifics that matter, components that translate to real behavior change and the ways in which they are willing to engage. At a higher level, our time together also underscored the power in coming together. The experiences and perspectives shared and the stories told bring strength to every organization and assist in reminding us that, at the end of the day, our main intent is to help. Together we can make a difference by directing our attention to showing up where they are searching and helping them know how to choose. ■

Appendix – Your Program Language

The following section consists of feedback from the participants regarding real program language. They were asked to do three things: indicate the language that was helpful, summarize how the program helps individuals, and list any additional questions about the program. NOTE: Program pseudonyms were used for the testing, but the actual programs have been identified for the report.

I. ABC Program a.k.a. Operation Hope's Banking on our Future

ABC Program elevates the dignity, hope, and economic self-sufficiency of people in low-wealth and underserved communities through financial literacy. Since its inception, the ABC Program has reached over 770,000 students in more than 700 schools and community-based organizations in the U.S. and South Africa.

ABC Program classes are free of charge for schools and communities. The program is led by ABC volunteers who have undergone comprehensive training in financial literacy and teaching techniques. Our ABC students are given the tools they need to take control of their financial futures - by learning about empowerment, responsibility, and hope.

ABC Program teaches financial literacy empowerment and currently has educated over 50,000 students. ABC Program is the recipient of the U.S. Treasury Department's John Sherman Award for Financial Literacy Excellence and Oprah's Angel Network's Use Your Life Award.

2014 Program Results

	Year to Date	Program to Date
Youth Educated	25,928	770,003
Volunteers Trained	722	20,851

ABC Program Feedback

In general, the participants were very impressed with the program information and found the language helpful.

In what ways does this program help people?

They feel the program educates people about financial literacy, instills hope, and puts them in control of their financial situations—all free of charge.

What questions do you have about this program?

- Is it offered to high school students? If so, at what grade?
- Does it offer hands-on experiences?
- Do you have any testimonials from participants?

JKL Program Feedback

In general, the participants found the program language very helpful. The key words or phrases that resonated with them were: high-quality employment services and tangible support. They had a negative reaction to Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and the Highlands Ability Battery—which indicates feelings about the tests rather than about the program.

In what ways does this program help people?

They can see that the program builds on experiences and skills the applicant already has to further their career and to broaden their options. They see the program as hands-on and innovative. The research-proven success and self-assessment use are seen as very helpful and confidence building.

What questions do you have about this program?

- Is it limited to a particular field or education level?

2. JKL Program a.k.a. JF&CS's Career Services

Career Counseling

JKL Tools for Employment offers high-quality employment services to job seekers, students and employers. Our innovative approach to career counseling, assessments and job search strategies provides those looking for a job with tools for defining career direction and conducting successful job searches as well as connections to actual jobs. We offer tangible supports to the job seeker in polishing his or her portfolio of skills and talents and making the best impression with an employer.

JKL Career Counseling helps people enhance their professional lives. Our career counselors work with individuals to strengthen their skills and/or learn new tools to achieve greater success and higher levels of satisfaction. Our services are designed to help people succeed in career exploration and career transition by providing one-on-one career counseling, career assessments, job search assistance and group workshops. Topics include job search strategy, resume development and interview preparation. You and your counselor will create a plan to help you reach your career-related goals.

Career Assessments & Testing for Students and Job Seekers:

Make career choices that are the best fit for YOU! Evaluate your interests, personality preferences, behavioral styles, values and natural abilities with these time-tested and research-validated instruments. After you complete your assessment on line, you will receive a written report as well as an in-depth feedback session with one of our experienced career counselors. Assessments offered include:

- Strong Interest Inventory
- Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
- Highlands Ability Battery

Please visit our website, designed by the U.S. Department of Labor and customized by JKL Career Services division, takes users on a comprehensive career directions path, from assessing career skills to looking for a job. This site is most helpful for those of you who are self-directed in your job search, but can provide useful tools for anyone along the career exploration path. You can engage with the site without outside resources, such as a counselor or workshop, but if you encounter a difficulty at any point, we have further options at JKL. This is a good place to start if you are looking for clues to a career path.

3. UVW Program a.k.a. Families First's Ways to Work

UVW Program is a national that allows qualified working parents who are unable to receive credit approval elsewhere the opportunity to receive loans between \$6,000 and \$6,500 to purchase a used car. The first program of its kind in Georgia, UVW Program is operated locally by UVW, with services offered in Metropolitan Atlanta. UVW and ABC Ford are proud to partner together through this program and offer families in Atlanta a great car-buying experience.

To be eligible for loan consideration, a potential borrower must:

- Be employed nine (9) months continuously and work 20+ hours a week
- Be the custodial parent
- Have a valid Georgia drivers license
- Have exhausted other loan sources
- Have a household income less than 80% of the Atlanta median income (Maximum income for a parent with two (2) children is \$51,750; maximum income for a parent with three (3) children is \$57,450)
- Reside in Metropolitan Atlanta
- MUST HAVE ALL BANKRUPTCIES DISCHARGED

UVW Program provides families with an alternative to predatory lenders who otherwise may lead them into buying unreliable vehicles at exorbitant interest rates, sometimes reaching 30% or more to customers who are already struggling to pay their monthly bills. Borrowers agree to repay the loan at an 8% interest rate within two years. The money is then made available to other applicants.

UVW Program Feedback

The participants felt they could easily understand the program, the eligibility and the benefits. Clearly they felt the program was beneficial to them personally. Where more details were offered for the program, they first reacted to the eligibility requirements, and seemed to indicate where they would qualify or disqualify.

- They felt the work history and 20+ hours per week requirement were good.
- They reacted somewhat negatively to the requirement that all other options had been exhausted, before this program would be available to them.
- One woman did not like the full custody of the children requirement.
- They reactive negatively to the household income requirement.
- One man did not like the requirement to have all bankruptcies discharged.

The loan rate and vehicle maintenance education were also well received.

In what ways does this program help people?

Participants can see that the program helps people improve their credit, borrow money to get a reliable car, and gain information they may not have thought to learn about, such as vehicle and preventive maintenance. One participant was concerned that the program pushes the candidate deeper into debt, when they clearly needed money.

What questions do you have about this program?

- What about joint custody? Would both parents qualify?
- Why would this have to be their last resort?



Program Benefits

- Teach financial literacy skills to loan applicants (Workshop Mandatory)
- Teach vehicle and preventative maintenance
- Provide low-interest loans between \$6,000 and \$6,500 to working parents
- Can improve each client's credit rating and gross earned income over time
- Has been shown to decrease time in transit to work
- Decrease dependence on public assistance
- Helps Increase attendance at work
- Enable increased parental involvement in child's academic success
- Boost credit score

Nationally, participants average a 40% increase in household income.

LMN Program Feedback

In general, the participants felt the information was helpful. They felt the paragraphs on education could be reduced to a couple of key thoughts:

Education is the cornerstone of all empowerment. Our programs are designed to equip metro Atlantans with the information and training they need to advance their education and obtain training to enhance their quality of life. It is never too late to pursue the career of your dreams.

In what ways does this program help people?

They could see that the program allows the participant to advance their skill sets and ultimately become self-sufficient.

What questions do you have about this program?

- How much does it cost?
- What are the possible salaries?

4. LMN Program a.k.a. Urban League's Workforce Development

Workforce Development

The LMN Program partners with employers in various industries to bridge the gap between talent ready LMN Participants and employers that seek provide career opportunities in both public and private sectors. In addition, we partner with employers to host Career Forums. Our career forums allow our partnering employers to conduct informational sessions and actively recruit for open positions within their company. During the 2012- 2013 fiscal year, LMN hosted 21 hiring events. Many of the companies that partnered with LMN this year provided a platform that allowed the LMN team to conduct pre-screening/ assessments and as a result 380 LMN participants were pre-screened and assessed for employment opportunities. A total of 318 LMN participants of those 380 were referred to employment within various industries.

Education/Training

Empowerment Through Education and Job Skills Training

Education is the cornerstone of all empowerment. Our programs are designed to equip metro Atlantans with the information and training they need to advance their education and obtain training to enhance their quality of life.

At LMN, we understand and advocate that education is still the key to moving up the economic ladder, and gainful employment is a core tenant of empowerment. We are committed to helping our clients raise their educational attainment and gain valuable job skills that will prepare them for jobs and careers in the 21st Century and our new economy. It is never too late to pursue the career of your dreams and “go back to school” to get the skills you need to succeed and our dedicated staff and volunteers will support you all the way to success!

Computer Training

LMN offers two levels of computer training. First is our Speedy Track Program. In the Speedy Track Computer Classes students may choose to learn Introduction to Microsoft Office 2013 Products, Advanced Microsoft Office 2013 Products. The second level is our Microsoft Office Specialist Certification Program. This is a 12-week program designed to provide trainees with the skills they need to successfully pass the MOS Certification test.

5. GHI Program a.k.a. Georgia Youth Opportunities Initiative's MAAC Program

GHI's Individual Development Account (IDA)

What is an IDA and how can I get one?

IDA stands for Individual Development Accounts and is a matched savings account from the GHI ILP program. Participants are eligible for a one time match of up to \$1,000, must be ILP eligible and participate in financial education classes.

What is GHI Program?

GHI focuses on improving outcomes for youth transitioning from foster care specifically in the outcome areas of permanence, education, employment, housing, physical and mental health, social capital and financial capability. GHI works with both public and private partners and with youth and adults. At the center of the Initiative is youth voice and ensuring they are represented and their voice heard.

GHI Program Feedback

In general, the participants felt the information is helpful. They particularly liked that the program is described as a match program and that it tells the full potential of the match.

In what ways does this program help people?

They see that the program as a kick-start program that gives foster care youth an incentive to save and earn extra money to get ahead in life. They see that the classes would be beneficial for their futures.

What questions do you have about this program?

- How long will the participant have to be in the program before they can access the funds?
- Will this program follow up with the participants to make sure the money is being used wisely?
- Are the participants required to give back or pay it forward to other incoming participants?

DEF Program Feedback

Participants, in general, found the language very informative. They liked that the language clearly stated:

- The program is free of charge
- The loan is a zero percent interest loan
- The loan would be forgiven after five years
- Key eligibility requirements were included

They were wondering what the other eligibility requirements were, but it seems that they would make the call to find out more.

In what ways does this program help people?

Participants see that the program can help homeowners who are unemployed or under employed with their mortgage during a period of hardship and helps them keep their homes.

What questions do you have about this program?

- What are the exact terms of the loan?

6. DEF Program a.k.a. D&E Power's Homeownership Program

Unemployed? Or Under Employed?

DEF Program is a mortgage program designed for unemployed and under-employed homeowners who are seeking to preserve homeownership.

The Georgia Department of Community Affairs has partnered with GHFA Affordable Housing, Inc. to deliver a statewide unemployment mortgage payment assistance program to prevent foreclosures, under the name DEF Program.

DEF Program will help by providing "bridge" mortgage assistance to many Georgians who are unemployed or have seen a dramatic decrease in their income due to national economic conditions. This service is FREE of charge!

What is it?

"Bridge" mortgage assistance to many Georgians who are unemployed or have seen a dramatic decrease in their income due to national economic conditions. Funding for DEF Program comes from the Treasury's Hardest Hit Fund. A zero percent interest rate loan for up to 24 months of mortgage payments. Loan is totally forgiven after 5 years

Who is Eligible for DEF Program mortgage assistance?

First and foremost, the Georgia homeowner must have suffered a hardship due to unemployment or underemployment through no fault of their own. Other hardships, while unfortunate, do not qualify under this program. The homeowner must be able and willing to work, and be seeking new or better employment.

The homeowner must have been current on his or her mortgage before

- What are the “other eligibility requirements”?
- Do you think this will place people in further financial peril?
- Who funds it?
- Does it help anyone who has low income?
- Do the homeowners have to participate in any type of programs after being qualified for funding?

the event of the unemployment or underemployment, and cannot be more than six months behind on the mortgage at the time of application.

Other eligibility requirements apply. Check Eligibility Requirements for details and an eligibility checklist. The applicant and property must meet all requirements. Additional underwriting criteria may also be established.



7. QRS Program a.k.a. Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs' Business Advisory Services

Business Advisory Services

QRS distinguishes itself from other lenders with our Business Advisory Services, which help our clients thrive as well as survive. We are committed to building the business knowledge of all of our applicants, whether or not they qualify – yet – for a loan. Our goal is never to say a resounding “no” to any ambitious entrepreneur willing to work toward a goal. When potential clients come to us with a blemished credit history or other impediments, we suggest possible steps and solutions to help them qualify later for a loan. And then, if they succeed, we help them establish and grow their businesses.

For start-ups and existing businesses, the friendly and highly trained staff members of QRS offer one-on-one assistance with marketing and website design; with budgeting and cash flow management; with staffing and hiring policies; with technical innovation and bureaucratic hurdles; and with the other unpredictable challenges that arise in the day-to-day operation of any business. Sometimes a quick word of advice from one phone call – or an afternoon spent sounding out some of the confusing aspects of a loan application with an expert — can make all of the difference in a business's success.

We support our borrowers during and after the loan closing and offer one-on-one consulting in many areas of business including but not limited to accounting, marketing, strategic planning, and operations. Through our Business Advisory Services, QRS will assist our small business borrowers to strengthen operations and improve sustainability.

QRS Program Feedback

The program description was very well received. They particularly liked the stated program objectives.

In what ways does this program help people?

They see that this program helps to get a specific plan in place for starting a business. They see value in helping with networking, addressing questions, and finding solutions. They also see that the program is available to individuals with poor credit.

What questions do you have about this program?

- What loan amounts are offered?
- Is this program offered to all consumers?

The objectives of the program include:

1. Building a relationship with our borrowers, evaluating their needs and connecting them with the appropriate consultant or educational opportunity.
2. Providing a resource guide to all clients that includes assistance that QRS can provide.
3. Providing access to a wide array of business providers for assistance on specific projects.
4. Connecting our borrowers with relevant classes, webinars, and seminars to help improve business operations.
5. Assessing our borrowers' financial strength and stability, and making the appropriate recommendations.
6. Sending a monthly newsletter for education, training and quick tips on various relevant topics.

The program is targeted towards our small business borrowers with annual revenues of \$1 million or less and with 10 or less employees.