

Deputy Assistant Secretary Dan Iannicola's Presentation of Treasury's Eight Elements of a Successful Financial Education Program to the Georgia Consortium for Personal Financial Literacy

The Office of Financial Education works to ensure that Americans have access to financial education programs that can help them obtain practical knowledge and skills to make informed financial choices throughout their lives. To that end, the Treasury Department published a list of eight elements of a successful financial education program. The success factors relate to the program's content, delivery, impact, and sustainability, and I suspect that upon closer inspection, many of the programs offered by the organizations represented here today are already well on their way to meeting these success factors. These elements can serve as a guide, whether your organization's goal is to develop new programs or to enhance existing program strategies for achieving the greatest impact throughout the state.

Our first element states that a successful financial education program is one that focuses on one or more of the four basic tenets of financial empowerment: basic savings, credit management, home ownership and retirement planning. While there are other worthwhile financial education topics, these four areas are the basic building blocks to achieving financial security and are therefore the primary focus of Treasury's Office of Financial Education.

Our second element points out that a successful program is tailored to its target audience, taking into account its language, culture, age and experience. Cultural biases, language differences, and other related factors play an important role in the development of any educational program.

Our third element of a successful financial education program recognizes that programs having the most profound impact are delivered through a local distribution channel that makes effective use of community resources and contacts. Partnerships with local organizations that are already ingrained in the community are one of the most effective means of garnering support and acceptance within a community and will result in the more effective delivery of information.

Our fourth element is demonstrated when a financial education program follows up with participants to reinforce the message and ensure that participants are able to apply the skills taught. These actions serve to further break down those barriers and to pave the road to better access to financial services.

Our fifth element requires that a successful program establishes specific program goals and uses performance measures to track progress toward meeting those goals. To achieve goals, an organization must set goals. It is important that financial education providers set a standard of excellence and track progress toward achieving their missions.

Our sixth element states that successful programs can prove their worth, by demonstrating a positive impact on participants' attitudes, knowledge or behavior through testing, surveys or other objective evaluation. Did participants increase their savings? Did they open bank accounts? Did they save for a home and qualify for a mortgage? These are all measures of success and ways that a financial education program can demonstrate impact on its community.

Our seventh element inquires whether a financial education program can be easily replicated on a local, regional or national basis so as to have broad impact and sustainability.

And finally, under our eighth element we ask whether a financial education program is built to last as evidenced by factors such as continuing financial support, legislative backing or integration into an established course of instruction. This element simply recognizes that good programs must have the ability to survive if they are to have a strong impact.

Additionally, organizations with an interest in financial education can also receive input on program design and available resources, explore partnerships with other organizations and learn about best practices in financial education through the office's recently launched Technical Assistance Center. By helping organizations to launch new programs or improve existing ones, the center fills an important need in the financial education community. The center can be accessed online at <http://www.treasury.gov/financialeducation> or by telephone at (202) 622-9372.