

# Financial Coaching Initiative: Results and lessons learned

# Table of contents

<b>1. Executive summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Initiative design</b> .....	<b>7</b>
3.1 Centralized program management, training, and evaluation .....	7
3.2 Decentralized delivery of coaching.....	8
<b>4. Data highlights</b> .....	<b>10</b>
4.1 Number of clients coached.....	10
4.2 Client demographics .....	12
4.3 Client recruitment.....	14
4.4 Number of coach-client interactions .....	15
4.5 Financial topics covered in coaching.....	17
4.6 Client outcomes .....	18
<b>5. Lessons learned</b> .....	<b>21</b>
5.1 Financial coaching was successfully integrated into a diverse range of organizations .....	21
5.2 Outreach and marketing skills were critical to each coach’s success ....	22
5.3 Coaches needed both coaching skills and financial subject matter expertise.....	23
5.4 Clients preferred to meet in-person for their first coaching session, but coaches used a variety of communication methods for subsequent meetings.....	24
5.5 Financial coaching is associated with increases in clients’ financial capability.....	24
5.6 Working with a coach more than once is associated with better outcomes, but one-time meetings may be valuable for many clients....	25

<b>6. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Appendix A: Host organizations .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Appendix B: Training and certification of coaches .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Appendix C: Data sources .....</b>	<b>31</b>
C.1 Case management system .....	31
<b>Appendix D: CFPB financial coaching resources .....</b>	<b>34</b>

# 1. Executive summary

An essential part of the mission of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (the CFPB) is to empower consumers to make better informed financial decisions. Financial coaching is a promising strategy to help consumers work toward their personal financial goals. Financial coaches combine money management expertise with more general coaching skills. They provide financial expertise, support, accountability, information, and tools to help people navigate the financial marketplace. Coaches help participants make progress toward the financial goals that participants identify as most meaningful for themselves.

Building on rigorous research demonstrating financial coaching yields measurable impact for clients, in 2015 the CFPB launched the Financial Coaching Initiative, a pilot program that provided financial coaching services to veterans and economically vulnerable consumers. Professional financial coaches were embedded into 60 host organizations across the country. The hosts included a wide range of partners from one-stop career centers to social services organizations and legal aid groups. The coaches provided free, one-on-one help to consumers to craft personalized plans to address individual financial goals. Clients worked toward personal goals around topics such as budgeting and money management, credit and debt, and savings.

During its four years in operation, the Financial Coaching Initiative served over 23,000 veterans and economically vulnerable consumers, demonstrating that financial coaching can be successfully implemented in many different settings targeting a wide range of consumers.

The Initiative provides lessons on how to implement a coaching program across a diverse range of communities and organizations. These lessons include the following:

1. Financial coaching was successfully integrated into a diverse range of organizations
2. Outreach and marketing skills were critical to each coach's success
3. Coaches needed both coaching skills and financial subject matter expertise
4. Clients preferred to meet in-person for their first coaching session, but coaches used a variety of communication methods for subsequent meetings
5. Financial coaching is associated with increases in clients' financial capability
6. Working with a coach more than once is associated with better outcomes, but one-time meetings may be valuable for many clients

In summary, the CFPB's financial coaching Initiative further demonstrates the effectiveness of coaching as a strategy that helps consumers make progress toward their financial goals and improves their financial lives.

## 2. Introduction

The mission of the CFPB is to empower consumers to take more control of their financial lives. The CFPB advances this mission by developing financial education content for consumers and supporting financial educators and other service providers who are focused on helping consumers reach their financial goals. One goal-focused approach to supporting consumers is financial coaching. Financial coaches help clients clarify their goals, commit to specific plans of action, and follow through on those commitments. Financial coaching's client-centered and goal-centered approach make it well-suited to address different financial challenges and opportunities faced by different client populations (see page 6 for more about financial coaching).

This report documents how the CFPB implemented its Financial Coaching Initiative and presents lessons learned for service providers interested in coaching. From 2015 to 2019, the CFPB placed 60 financial coaches in organizations across the country. The CFPB chose this integrated approach in part because host organization clients could provide financial coaches a client base to recruit from. This approach also allowed the CFPB to explore how coaching may complement other services (such as employment assistance and legal aid). The host organizations varied in terms of geography, the types of services they offered, and the populations they served. This diversity allowed the CFPB to observe how coaching integrates into a variety of settings. In total, the coaches worked with 23,005 clients from two primary target populations: military veterans and economically vulnerable consumers.<sup>1</sup>

The findings presented in this report build on earlier CFPB financial coaching projects. These projects include the first randomized controlled trial of financial coaching for low- and moderate-income consumers and a 2017 symposium on financial coaching. In the randomized controlled trial, the CFPB found that access to financial coaching resulted in measurable gains in three areas for consumers: money management; objective financial health metrics like savings balances, debt levels, and credit scores; and subjective feelings of financial confidence and financial well-being. The evaluation also showed that coaching is a flexible approach that can

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<sup>1</sup> The Initiative was managed by the CFPB's Servicemember Affairs and Community Affairs Sections (the latter formerly the Office of Financial Empowerment). The Servicemember Affairs Section helps military families overcome financial challenges by providing educational resources, monitoring complaints, and working with other agencies to solve problems faced by current and former servicemembers and their families. The Community Affairs Section engages in a similar set of activities but focuses on economically vulnerable consumers. Veterans and economically vulnerable consumers are not mutually exclusive groups. Although most veteran clients received financial coaching at the host organizations that focused their outreach on veterans, several hundred veterans received services at the sites for economically vulnerable consumers.

work for many types of clients with a wide range of financial goals.<sup>2</sup> The 2017 Financial Coaching Symposium brought together financial coaches, program managers, researchers, and funders from across the country to discuss strategies to ensure the delivery of high-quality financial coaching. A subsequent report summarized coaching principles and next steps identified at the Symposium.<sup>3</sup>

This report provides an overview of the CFPB's Financial Coaching Initiative. The next section describes the basic structure of the Initiative and subsequent sections present data about the program and summarize key lessons learned. The report ends with a list of CFPB resources for practitioners and organizations interested in financial coaching.

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<sup>2</sup> Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 2016. Financial Coaching: A Strategy to Improve Financial Well-Being. Available at [www.consumerfinance.gov/data-research/research-reports/financial-coaching-strategy-improve-financial-well-being](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/data-research/research-reports/financial-coaching-strategy-improve-financial-well-being).

<sup>3</sup> Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 2017. Financial Coaching: Advancing the Field to Better Serve Consumers. Available at [www.consumerfinance.gov/data-research/research-reports/financial-coaching-advancing-field-better-serve-consumers](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/data-research/research-reports/financial-coaching-advancing-field-better-serve-consumers).

## WHAT IS FINANCIAL COACHING?

This report looks at how the CFPB integrated financial coaches into 60 organizations across the country. Financial coaching is related to, yet distinct from, financial education and counseling. Defining characteristics of financial coaching include:

- **Goal-oriented and future-focused.** Financial coaches help clients define their financial goals, develop specific plans of action, monitor their progress, and adjust their plans as needed.
- **Client-directed and nonjudgmental.** Financial coaches help clients define their goals, but ultimately each client decides which financial goal(s) he or she will pursue.
- **Strengths-based approach.** Financial coaches work with clients to identify clients' strengths and find new ways of applying those strengths toward their financial goals.
- **Ongoing support.** The coach serves as a source of ongoing encouragement and accountability for clients.
- **Subject matter expertise.** Though client-centered, financial coaches know when to request the client's permission to provide specific guidance or make referrals.

Financial coaching is a diverse field with multiple approaches and training curricula. Financial coaches' training may cover both financial content and more general coaching skills and methods, with an emphasis on collaboration and client-centeredness. Training also helps coaches identify when it is appropriate to request a client's permission to use a more directive approach or refer the client to other services. Financial coaching can also be offered as a standalone service, and different service providers can use different financial coaching strategies in their work without taking a holistic financial coaching approach. Thus, a coach may transition between different ways of working with a client, depending on the client's financial goals and circumstances.

Available data indicate that several hundred financial coaching programs are operating across the country. For example, a total of 318 organizations from 43 states responded to the most recent round of a multi-year survey of the financial coaching programs.\* Financial coaching programs operate at the local and national levels, with several national intermediaries running large-scale coaching programs. For example, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) has a network of over 100 coaching programs across the country.\*\*

The CFPB's financial coaching [webpage](#) provides additional information and resources.

\*Asset Funders Network, 2019. The Financial Coaching Census.

\*\*[www.lisc.org/our-initiatives/financial-stability/financial-opportunity-centers](http://www.lisc.org/our-initiatives/financial-stability/financial-opportunity-centers).

# 3. Initiative design

Leading up to the Financial Coaching Initiative, the CFPB had observed a variety of financial coaching models across the country. Some organizations were offering financial coaching as a standalone service, some were integrating aspects of coaching into their financial counseling or education programs, and others were incorporating financial coaching into other programs, such as job training. The CFPB took a particular interest in an integrated approach to financial coaching—offering financial coaching within an organization that provides other services. An integrated approach would give coaches an existing client base to recruit from and could enhance the effectiveness of other services at the host organizations.

To put an integrated approach into practice, the CFPB partnered with 60 organizations across the country to serve as host sites for financial coaches from 2015 to 2019.<sup>4</sup> At these organizations, professional coaches offered free one-on-one financial coaching to two primary target populations: veterans and economically vulnerable consumers. Coaches were placed in host organizations and while they established relationships with management and staff at those sites, they were managed by a central contractor. This differs from an integrated approach where a host organization brings on their own staff or volunteer financial coaches.

## 3.1 Centralized program management, training, and evaluation

Through a competitive federal procurement process, the CFPB selected the Armed Forces Services Corporation (AFSC), later known as Magellan Federal, to lead the Initiative. AFSC's responsibilities included supporting the CFPB's selection of host organizations, hiring and training coaches (who were AFSC employees), monitoring the performance of coaches and host organizations, supporting coaches' efforts to market coaching and recruit clients, providing office equipment, and the many other tasks needed to operate the program.

ASFC subcontracted subject matter experts to lead certain aspects of the Initiative. Researchers from the Urban Institute conducted an independent process evaluation of the program's implementation, and trainers from the Association for Financial Counseling and Planning Education (AFCPE) and Sage Financial Solutions conducted training and professional

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix A for a list of the Financial Coaching Initiative host organizations.

development for the coaches. Appendix B provides additional information about coaches' training and certification.

## 3.2 Decentralized delivery of coaching

The centralized management approach helped to standardize the Initiative's approach to training, coaching strategies, and data collection activities. However, the actual delivery of financial coaching was decentralized, led by AFSC coaches working at the 60 different locations throughout the country. All coaches either possessed or pursued both the Accredited Financial Counselor and the Financial Fitness Coach designations through AFCPE. Coaches were AFSC employees and the program's direct representatives in their communities. Although integrated into local organizations, the coaches were employed by AFSC, not the host organizations.

The CFPB selected 60 organizations to serve as host organizations for the financial coaches. The host organizations agreed to a set of requirements including providing office space and access to private space for coaching sessions. The host organizations were encouraged to refer their own clients to the coaches, as appropriate, which helped coaches establish a client base. Each host site was unique in terms of its clients, community setting, and coaching integration strategies.

The host organizations were initially divided into two categories, depending on the predominant target population they served: veterans or economically vulnerable consumers.

- To reach veterans, the CFPB partnered with the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) to identify 40 host organizations, which were primarily American Job Centers that offered veterans services through DOL's Gold Card initiative.<sup>5</sup> These sites volunteered to host a coach.
- The CFPB used a competitive process to select 20 organizations serving economically vulnerable consumers.<sup>6</sup> These sites included social service organizations, legal aid organizations, financial service organizations, and educational institutions, among others.

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<sup>5</sup> The DOL Gold Card initiative provides unemployed post-9/11 era veterans with enhanced intensive services including six months of follow-up at One-Stop Career Centers. The Gold Card services include a combination of intensive services, including skills assessment, career coaching, and job search assistance over a six-month period to jump-start the veterans' job search process and reconnect them to the civilian labor force in high-demand sectors.

<sup>6</sup> The selection criteria for these sites included geographic distribution, client foot-traffic volume, a demonstrated understanding of financial coaching, organizational stability, proximity to public transportation, physical accessibility, complementary services, and capacity to integrate coaching.

These two populations are not mutually exclusive. Table 1 on page 12 provides more information about the crossover between economically vulnerable and veteran clients.

As the Initiative progressed, the CFPB and AFSC recognized a third group of sites, deemed “hybrid” sites, that targeted their outreach to veterans and economically vulnerable consumers. At the end of the Initiative, there were 34 veteran sites, 16 sites serving economically vulnerable consumers, and 10 hybrid sites. Appendix A lists each host organization and its categorization.

Although host organizations served as financial coaches’ base and as a source of potential clients, coaches put significant effort into forming relationships with other organizations in their communities. Partner organizations made direct referrals to financial coaches and helped market coaching. In some cases, coaches spent part of their week working from a partner organization’s office, making it easier for clients to meet with them. When appropriate, coaches also referred clients whose needs were outside the scope of financial coaching to local partners that provided trusted services in the community. Coaches’ relationships with local partner organizations outside the host organization looked different in each community but in all cases were critical to coaches’ success in serving clients.

Figure 1 summarizes the organizations involved in the Initiative and their roles. The Initiative’s centralized management structure combined with the dispersed delivery of coaching provides an opportunity to consider the Initiative as a single, nationwide program. Consider also that each of the 60 sites looked somewhat different, depending on how coaches integrated their services into host organizations and conducted their outreach and marketing to their local community.

**FIGURE 1:** ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN THE FINANCIAL COACHING INITIATIVE

National	Local
<p><b>Program management and oversight</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consumer Financial Protection Bureau</li> <li>• Armed Forces Services Corporation (AFSC, later Magellan Federal)</li> </ul> <p><b>Coach training and professional development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Association for Financial Counseling &amp; Planning Education</li> <li>• Sage Financial Solutions</li> </ul> <p><b>Process evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Urban Institute</li> </ul>	<p><b>Marketing, client recruitment, and coaching delivery</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial coaches (AFSC employees)</li> </ul> <p><b>Client recruitment channels</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host sites</li> <li>• Local partner organizations</li> </ul>

# 4. Data highlights

After more than a year of planning and preparation, the financial coaches started meeting with clients in March 2015 and continued to do so through March 2019. The following program highlights draw from information sources collected by AFSC, the Urban Institute, and the CFPB, particularly the program's case management data. Appendix C describes the information sources in further detail.

For the Initiative, the purpose of data collection was to provide information that AFSC and the CFPB could use to manage the program. The CFPB previously published the results of a formal evaluation on the efficacy of financial coaching, as summarized below.

## **Earlier CFPB research demonstrated financial coaching's effectiveness**

In the CFPB's randomized control trial of financial coaching, published in 2016, clients from two organizations were randomly assigned to a treatment or control group. Working with a financial coach resulted in gains for participating low- and moderate- income consumers in three areas: money management; objective financial health metrics like savings balances, debt levels, and credit scores; and subjective feelings of financial confidence and financial well-being.

The full details of the CFPB's evaluation of financial coaching and its implications for practitioners are available at [www.consumerfinance.gov/data-research/research-reports/financial-coaching-strategy-improve-financial-well-being](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/data-research/research-reports/financial-coaching-strategy-improve-financial-well-being).

## 4.1 Number of clients coached

Throughout the program, AFSC and the CFPB closely monitored trends in the number of clients served by each coach. Doing so allowed the management team to help coaches with lower client volumes develop new integration, marketing, and recruitment strategies. As coaches at all sites experimented with different strategies, they shared effective practices with one another on regular video calls and through annual in person meetings. In addition, coaches developed strong relationships with each other and would reach out to one another for assistance.

## Coaches served 23,005 clients, including 13,013 veterans

As shown in Table 1, the coaches served a total of 23,005 clients: 6,811 at sites for economically vulnerable clients, 13,304 at veteran sites, and 2,890 at hybrid sites. Fifty-seven percent of all clients, or 13,013 clients, were veterans. A small percentage of veterans received services at the sites for economically vulnerable consumers, and some clients at the veteran sites were non-veterans.<sup>7</sup> Just under one-half of clients at the hybrid sites were veterans, with economically vulnerable consumers representing a slight majority of clients at those sites.

**TABLE 1:** NUMBER OF CLIENTS COACHED BY HOST ORGANIZATION TARGET POPULATION AND VETERAN STATUS

Host organization target population	Number of sites	Total clients	Veterans	Percentage of clients who were veterans
Veterans	38	13,304	11,332	86%
Economically vulnerable consumers	16	6,811	410	6%
Hybrid	12	2,890	1,271	45%
<b>Total</b>	<b>66*</b>	<b>23,005</b>	<b>13,013</b>	<b>57%</b>

Source: Case management system data. \*The total number of sites is 66 because some sites closed, merged, or opened during the Initiative. At any given point in time, up to 60 sites were operational, so the report refers to the number of sites as 60. Note: Veteran status was not recorded for 152 clients; these clients were excluded when calculating the percentages of clients who were veterans.

Adjusting for the amount of time each site was open, each coach served an average of 103 new clients per “coach year.” In other words, a coach at work a full year could be expected to recruit and coach 103 new clients that year, on average. Comparing caseloads across programs is difficult due to the multitude of factors that determine how many clients a coach sees. For example, coaches in this Initiative devoted all of their time to coaching, while coaches in a different program might spend only a portion of their time on coaching. Nonetheless, caseloads from other studies help provide perspective and context. In the CFPB’s earlier evaluation of coaching, coaches at both participating organizations saw about 60 new clients per year. A large-scale survey of the financial coaching field conducted in 2015, 2017, and 2019 found that coaches tend to have a caseload of about 10 to 15 clients per month, but caseloads vary significantly across coaches and organizations. Coaches who responded to the survey may have

<sup>7</sup> Some veterans are economically vulnerable, explaining why several hundred veterans were coached at sites for economically vulnerable consumers. Family members of veterans were encouraged to seek coaching at the veteran sites and likely account for some of the non-veteran clients at those sites.

included all active clients in their estimates, not just new or incoming clients. Overall, 103 new clients annually per coach appears to be roughly in line with the range typical of other programs.

Although the Initiative aimed to serve as many clients as possible, client volume alone does not tell the complete story of what happened at each site. For example, differences in client volumes between two sites could reflect external factors such as the size or demographics of the surrounding community. Coaches only captured data about coaching program clients. As a result, the data does not reflect other interactions coaches had with consumers while marketing coaching or recruiting clients, such as free financial events conducted for community members.

## 4.2 Client demographics

Client demographics were collected at all economically vulnerable consumer sites and from non-veteran clients at hybrid sites.<sup>8</sup> Client demographics looked similar between each of these groups, so they are combined in Figure 2 and Table 2.

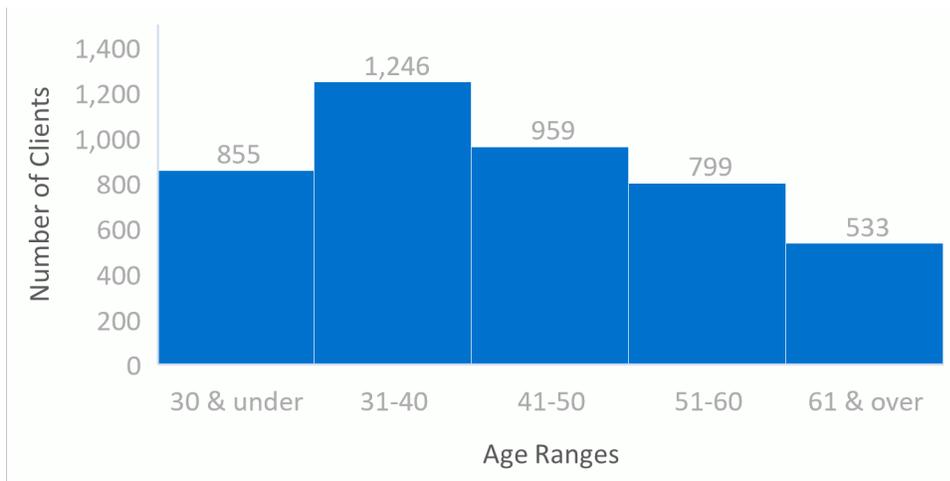
### Clients were diverse in terms of their age and other demographic characteristics

Figure 2 displays the number of clients in each age range. Ages are broadly distributed, peaking in the 31-40 age range and gradually declining over the subsequent ranges. Clients' average age was 43.5. Although age was not recorded for a significant number of clients, particularly veterans, the age distribution indicates that coaching attracted clients at many different stages in their financial lives—from completing their education and getting started in the workforce through retirement.

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<sup>8</sup> Appendix C provides additional information about the differences in data collection requirements between the veteran and economically vulnerable sites. Further described in Appendix C, the data collection requirements at hybrid sites depended on the client's veteran status.

**FIGURE 2: DISTRIBUTION OF CLIENTS BY AGE**



Source: Clients at EVC sites and non-veteran clients at hybrid sites (n=5,246).

Table 2 summarizes additional demographic data. The demographics are again limited to all clients at economically vulnerable sites and non-veterans at hybrid sites. The demographics are for the program as a whole, and client demographics varied widely across sites due to local demographics (e.g., rural versus urban host organizations), the types of services that host organizations offered, and other factors.

Overall, seventy percent of clients were female. About half of clients were single, 22 percent were married, a quarter were divorced or separated, and a small percentage were widowed. Forty-four percent of clients had children or dependents, and 69 percent of those who did had one or two dependents. Educational attainment was broadly distributed across the categories, the most common being a high school diploma or equivalent at 31 percent. Twenty-two percent of clients had some post-secondary training, suggesting that a subset of clients was enrolled in a degree or training program at the time of coaching. About one-quarter of clients had a bachelor's or an advanced degree. Fourteen percent had completed an associate degree or vocational training.

**TABLE 2: CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS**

Characteristic	Percent of Clients
<b>Sex (n=7,783)</b>	
Female	70%
Male	30%
<b>Marital Status (n=6,901)</b>	
Single / Never Married	49%
Divorced or Separated	26%
Married	22%
Widowed	3%
<b>Had Children or Dependents (n=7,941)</b>	44%
<b>Highest Educational Attainment (n=6,169)</b>	
Less than HS Diploma	6%
HS Diploma or Equivalent (GED)	31%
Some post-secondary	22%
Vocational technical training	6%
Associate Degree	8%
Bachelor's Degree	19%
Advanced degree	7%
Other	1%
<b>Race and Ethnicity (n=7,994)</b>	
White (non-Hispanic or Latino)	38%
Black or African American (non-Hispanic or Latino)	42%
Hispanic or Latino	13%
Other (non-Hispanic or Latino)	7%

Source: Case management data covering all clients at EVC sites and non-veteran clients at hybrid sites.

Coaches recorded each client's race and ethnicity separately. The race of the vast majority of Hispanic or Latino clients was recorded as other or white. Thus, Table 2 displays race and ethnicity together, with all racial groups except the last excluding clients who were Hispanic or Latino. A slightly higher percentage of clients were Black or African American than White (all non-Hispanic or Latino): 42 percent versus 38 percent, respectively. Thirteen percent of clients were Hispanic or Latino. Seven percent of clients were other races (non-Hispanic or Latino).

## 4.3 Client recruitment

The case management data provide insight into how coaches recruited clients and clients found their coach.

## Half of clients came from host organization referrals

The Initiative's design assumed that a strong majority of coaching clients would come from within the host organizations, with host organizations' existing clients serving as a pool of potential clients. In practice, recruiting clients proved more challenging than expected, especially in the opening months of the Initiative. Data from the economically vulnerable consumer sites and from non-veteran clients at hybrid sites shows that about half of clients had been referred to coaching by one of the host organizations, lower than originally expected. Even referrals from within a host organization did not necessarily come easily for the coaches, again particularly at the start of the Initiative.

Local circumstances were different for each coach, but early recruitment challenges were partially attributed to a lack of training on outreach and marketing. Financial knowledge and coaching skills were the focus of the Initiative's early training efforts, and it became apparent that more emphasis on outreach and marketing were critical, even within an integrated model.

To increase their client numbers, coaches developed partnerships with other organizations in their communities. Like they did within their host sites, coaches used these partnerships to identify and recruit potential clients. Word of mouth and other marketing efforts were also important but not recorded in as much detail in the case management system as referrals.

Several reasons may explain why client recruitment proved more challenging than expected. One possible challenge reflected in the case management data is simply a lack of awareness of what financial coaching services are. Over 90 percent of clients had never participated in financial coaching before. A lack of familiarity with coaching meant that coaches not only had to get the word out that coaching was available in the community, but also familiarize people with the work of financial coaches.

## 4.4 Number of coach-client interactions

Clients' engagement levels with coaching may be defined or measured in different ways. To monitor 60 coaches dispersed across the country, the CFPB and AFSC tracked the number of interactions clients had with their coaches as a basic measure of program engagement. Coaches recorded each interaction with their clients in the case management system, information that the CFPB and AFSC then analyzed in terms of the average number of interactions per client. In addition, coaches recorded data about the length and mode (e.g., in-person) of each interaction.

## Clients met with their coach an average of 2.2 times

Coaches had a total of 50,472 coaching interactions with clients, an average of 2.2 per client, as shown in Table 3. Coaches at hybrid sites had a slightly higher average number of sessions per client at 2.5. The 50,472 sessions work out to an average of about 225 interactions per year per coach, adjusting for the length of time each site was open. On a monthly basis, this equates to each coach having an average of 19 interactions with clients.

**TABLE 3:** TOTAL AND AVERAGE NUMBER OF INTERACTIONS BY TYPE OF SITE

Coaching interactions	Veterans	Economically vulnerable consumers	Hybrid	All sites
Total number of interactions with clients	28,754	14,567	7,151	50,472
Average number of interactions per client	2.2	2.1	2.5	2.2

Source: Case management system.

## 44 percent of clients met with their coach more than once

Shown in the last column of Table 4, 56 percent of all clients interacted with their coach once, 21 percent twice, 9 percent three times, and 13 percent four or more times. These breakdowns were consistent across the three types of sites and broadly similar to the earlier CFPB evaluation of financial coaching as well as engagement rates typically reported by other coaching programs. In a periodic survey of coaches nationally, coaches reported that clients tend to meet with their coach about three times.<sup>9</sup> In the CFPB's rigorous evaluation of two coaching programs, about half of coaching clients attended only one session. The CFPB's earlier evaluation of financial coaching showed that people who met with coaches, even once, made more financial gains than people who did not meet with financial coaches.

**TABLE 4:** TOTAL NUMBER OF INTERACTIONS PER CLIENT BY TYPE OF SITE

Total coaching interactions by client	Veterans	Economically Vulnerable Consumers	Hybrid	All sites
1 interaction	57%	55%	54%	56%
2 interactions	21%	23%	21%	21%
3 interactions	9%	9%	10%	9%
4 or more interactions	13%	13%	16%	13%

<sup>9</sup> Asset Funders Network, The Financial Coaching Census 2019.

Source: Case management system. Columns may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Neither the number of interactions a client has with a coach nor the percent of clients who meet with their coach more than once is a measure of coaching's effectiveness. A client who attends only one coaching session could make significant progress toward a financial goal. Likewise, a client who attends many sessions could see his or her progress stall. In fact, the CFPB's prior coaching evaluation found that even one coaching session can prove beneficial, and that clients' progress appeared to slow after eight sessions.

## Initial sessions tended to be in person and were typically longer than subsequent meetings

Coaches often felt that setting expectations and explaining coaching at the first session helped ground the coaching model in a framework of empowerment and choice. The coaches aimed to set realistic expectations and reduce clients' confusion or discomfort. Given the importance of the initial coaching session for setting the terms of the engagement and initiating the coaching process, initial coaching meetings were usually longer than subsequent ones: 67 minutes on average for clients' first sessions versus 50 minutes for subsequent ones. Initial meetings were also much more likely to occur in person; 82 percent of initial sessions were in person versus 52 percent of subsequent sessions. In-person meetings tended to be longer than other types of interactions, especially after the initial session. For example, excluding initial sessions, in person meetings averaged 64 minutes but phone interactions 34 minutes.

## 4.5 Financial topics covered in coaching

Consistent with financial coaching's client-centered orientation, clients worked on a wide range of financial topics and goals with their coaches. The coaches tailored their approach to meet the needs of individual clients and made referrals to other services as appropriate.

### Clients set goals across a range of financial topics

Clients set and revised goals at different points in the coaching process. Coaches recorded over 48,000 financial goals in the case management system. Coaches then categorized each goal using a list of pre-defined topics. For example, one coach categorized a client's goal of being "able to pay all bills on time" as Money Management and Budgeting. Coaches used their own judgement when deciding on the categorizations, leading to some overlap across the categories—for example, one coach may have categorized an outstanding bill as debt while another coach categorized it as credit. As shown in Table 5, the most common goal categories were money management and budgeting (20 percent of clients), debt (15 percent), other (14 percent), credit

(13 percent), and household financial security (12 percent). Table 3 also includes a sample written goal from each category to illustrate how clients articulated and coaches recorded goals.

**TABLE 5: CLIENT GOALS**

Category	Percent of all goals	Sample written goal
Money Management and Budgeting	20%	Be able to pay all bills on time
Debt	15%	Be debt free in 27 weeks
Other	14%	Begin tithing \$100 per month
Credit	13%	Check credit reports to see if the disputed/settled items have changed
Household's Financial Security	12%	File for military retirement
Homeownership or Home Rental	9%	Save \$10,000 for down payment
Non-Retirement Savings	6%	Allocate \$500 of discretionary income to towards \$100 cushion, \$400 credit card debt
Education or Training (including children's)	4%	Start funding 529 plans for kids
Retirement Savings	3%	Consolidate 401k plans and choose new account holder either bank or credit union
Starting or Improving a Business	3%	Improve credit score enough to get loan for new business
Large Purchase	2%	I will save \$100 from each paycheck to reach \$1,000.00 to buy car

Source: Case management data. N=48,441 goals.

Coaches also recorded each goal's timeframe. Over one-half of clients' goals were short-term or immediate, 27 percent were classified as intermediate, and 16 percent as long-term (n=48,411 goals). These figures indicate that many clients were dealing with pressing financial matters, though over 40 percent of goals applied to a longer time horizon.

## 4.6 Client outcomes

All coaches at sites serving economically vulnerable clients entered clients' responses to the Financial Capability Scale (FCS), a five-question survey that measures clients' financial behavior and confidence, into the case management system.<sup>10</sup> Coaches at veteran sites had access to the FCS questions but were not required to use them with clients. Coaches at hybrid sites used the

<sup>10</sup> The Financial Capability Scale was developed by the University of Wisconsin Madison Center for Financial Security. More information is available at [fyi.extension.wisc.edu/financialcoaching/measures](http://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/financialcoaching/measures). The CFPB's Financial Well-Being Scale, another measure of consumers' financial situations and their financial capability, was still under development at the time of the Initiative and therefore not used. More information about the Financial Well-Being Scale is available at [consumerfinance.gov/data-research/research-reports/financial-well-being-scale](http://consumerfinance.gov/data-research/research-reports/financial-well-being-scale).

FCS with non-veteran clients but were not required to do so with veterans. Appendix C describes the FCS in greater detail.

Client responses to the five questions were combined into a single FCS score ranging from zero to seven. Higher FCS scores indicate greater financial capability. Client progress was tracked using both their overall FCS scores and their responses to the individual questions.

## Returning clients’ financial capability increased over time

Table 6 breaks out clients’ FCS scores by the number of times they worked with a coach. Clients’ average FCS score at their first coaching meeting was 3.0. Clients who worked with a coach twice finished with an average FCS of 3.6. The same figure is 4.0 for clients who worked with a coach three times, and 4.3 for the nearly 3,000 clients who worked with a coach four or more times. Thus, not only did clients’ see their average FCS scores go up but attending more coaching sessions is associated with higher final FCS scores. These associations are not causal. Clients’ final scores were collected at their last coaching session, not after a later follow-up period.

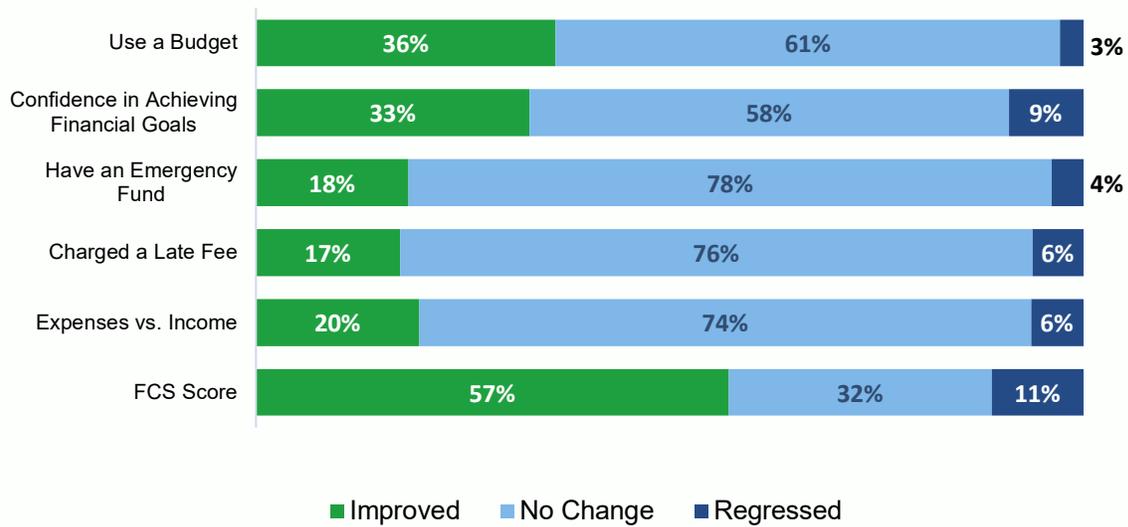
**TABLE 6:** AVERAGE FCS SCORE BY NUMBER OF COACHING INTERACTIONS

Total coaching interactions	Initial FCS score	Final FCS score	Number of clients
1 interaction	3.0	No change	12,320
2 interactions	3.0	3.6	4,734
3 interactions	3.0	4.0	2,066
4 or more interactions	3.0	4.3	2,929

Source: Case management data.

The FCS can also be broken out by individual questions. Figure 4 shows the percent of clients who improved, stayed the same, or regressed on each FCS question from the first time they completed it to the last. For example, 36 percent of clients improved their budgeting, which in this case means they went from not using a personal budget, spending plan, or financial plan to using one. Across all five of the FCS questions, the “net” improvement was positive (the number of clients who improved minus the number who regressed was positive). The net improvement ranged from 11 points for incurring a late fee (17 percent improved, and 6 percent regressed) to 33 points for use of a budget (36 percent versus 3 percent). Across all five questions, a majority of clients’ scores stayed the same, but when combined together, 57 percent of clients saw an improvement in the overall FCS score, versus 11 percent whose score got worse.

**FIGURE 3: CHANGE IN CLIENTS' FCS RESPONSES AND SCORES FROM THEIR INITIAL TO FINAL COACHING SESSIONS**



Source: Case management data.

## At their first session, most clients set financial goals; some clients were able to complete action steps or even shorter-term goals at those initial meetings

Over 90 percent of clients established at least one written financial goal that the coaches entered into the case management system. Among clients who attended only one coaching session, about one-quarter were able to complete an action or even a goal during that initial session—highlighting that some clients may seek coaching for help with highly defined, shorter-term items. Clients who attended more sessions tended to accomplish more of their financial goals, with nearly two-thirds of clients who attended four or more sessions completing at least one goal and another 23 percent completing actions toward a goal. Fifty-five percent of clients who worked with a coach twice completed an action or a goal, as did 70 percent of clients who worked with a coach three times.

# 5. Lessons learned

This section highlights key lessons learned from the Initiative. These lessons were drawn from the data presented above, the additional data sources outlined in Appendix C, and the CFPB’s first-hand experience running the program for more than four years.

## 5.1 Financial coaching was successfully integrated into a diverse range of organizations

The diversity of the 60 sites show that financial coaching is a flexible approach capable of being integrated into many different settings. Host organizations included both nonprofit organizations and public agencies. The host organizations included job centers, educational institutions, legal aid clinics, social service organizations, and other types of organizations. Each host organization was unique in terms of the community where it was located, the target population it served, the set of services it offered, and other characteristics. Thus, integration—the ways coaches embedded themselves into their host organizations and the broader community—looked different at each site.

The process of integrating a coach into a host organizations included:

- Basic logistics, such as providing coaches with appropriate office space and sufficient materials to use with clients, or creating processes to refer clients to the coach
- Making sure staff in the host organization understood the coach’s role and what the service entailed
- Gaining supervisor and leadership buy-in and support
- Establishing client referral processes at each host organization

Coaches’ perceptions of successful integration depended on numerous factors. Coaches serving economically vulnerable consumers felt most comfortable when the host organization understood their role and services and valued them as an addition to the organization instead of a separate service. A requirement of a well-integrated program, as described by many coaches, was a strong referral system in which the site was already attracting people well-suited for and interested in financial coaching. Also, well-integrated coaches found that financial coaching was well understood among host organization staff and their services were valued.

Despite fewer than expected client referrals from their host organization, most coaches reported a positive relationship with their host organizations. Further, 90 percent of coaches reported that their integration into their host organization improved over time. During the course of the Initiative, AFSC undertook several strategies to increase client take-up, including hiring an outreach coordinator, reallocating coaches to more active sites, increasing training and development for coaches, monitoring sites more closely throughout the year, and providing site data reports to host organizations.

Overall, financial coaching proved to be a flexible approach suitable for a variety of settings. Successful coaches helped host organizations understand and value coaching as a service for clients and were prepared to refer clients to coaches as appropriate. With a well-prepared host organization, coaching can add value to the other work of the organization.

The Incentive's centralized management helped bring standardization and efficiencies to training and professional development, monitoring program performance, and other aspects of running the program. At the same time, the financial coaches had the flexibility needed to successfully integrate coaching into their local host organizations.

## 5.2 Outreach and marketing skills were critical to each coach's success

A key assumption in the Initiative's design was that host organization referrals would account for a large percentage of coaching clients, thereby limiting the amount of time and resources coaches would need to devote to marketing and recruitment. In practice, recruiting clients from the host organizations was more difficult than anticipated, with about half of clients ultimately coming from host organization referrals. While financial knowledge and coaching skills were the focus of early training efforts, it became apparent that more emphasis on outreach and marketing were critical even within an integrated model.

Over time, through training and experience, coaches developed stronger outreach and marketing skills, both within their host organizations and in the broader community. Coaches had to engage staff and management within their host organization to help recruit potential clients. Outside of their host organizations, coaches needed to develop partnerships with other organizations in the community and identify additional client recruitment channels.

## 5.3 Coaches needed both coaching skills and financial subject matter expertise

Financial coaching applies general coaching skills to financial topics. In designing the program, the CFPB had to make decisions about how much of the training and professional development of coaches should focus on coaching skills and how much on financial subject matter expertise. Although coaching is sometimes described as a process of helping clients work toward intermediate and longer-term goals, the CFPB assumed that many clients would be interested in shorter-term interactions to obtain specific pieces of information and others would be focused on responding to a financial crisis. Thus, the foundation of coaches' training was strong financial expertise combined with the ability to integrate coaching elements into different types of interactions with clients. Coaches were required to complete two certifications, the Accredited Financial Counselor (AFC) certification and the Financial Fitness Coach (FFC) certification.<sup>11</sup> The AFC provided the content-based knowledge of financial topics, and the FFC certification focuses on the tools particular to financial coaching, especially its collaborative client-focused nature. This combination of training requirements helped coaches tailor their approach to the needs and interests of each client.

The assumptions that went into the training and professional development requirements were confirmed over the course of running the program. Clients came from a diverse range of backgrounds and were interested in working on many different types of financial topics with their coach. In some cases, clients were interested in obtaining specific pieces of information while others wanted to focus on working toward longer-term financial goals. The Initiative's training combined training in financial coaching and in key financial subjects, giving coaches the ability to work with clients differently depending on their needs and interests. Coaches reported both were integral to client engagement and achieving results.

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<sup>11</sup> The Association for Financial Counseling and Planning Education (AFCPE) offered both certifications. Appendix B provides more information about the Initiative's training and professional development requirements.

## 5.4 Clients preferred to meet in-person for their first coaching session, but coaches used a variety of communication methods for subsequent meetings

In-person visits were most common for initial coaching sessions, but phone, email, text, and video communications made up a significant percentage of subsequent interactions. The use of virtual methods increased over the course of the Initiative, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This shift raises a host of questions, including how organizations can continue to safely collect data remotely.

Nonetheless, the Initiative's data suggest a preference for in-person initial meetings among many coaches and clients. Subsequent meetings then shifted toward remote communications, though in-person meetings remained popular. Overall, coaches must become comfortable with using a range of ways to communicate with clients, depending on a client's preferences and access to technology.

## 5.5 Financial coaching is associated with increases in clients' financial capability

Financial coaching was associated with increases in client financial capability, as measured by the FCS.<sup>12</sup> Overall, 57 percent of clients saw their FCS scores increase during coaching, with 32 percent experiencing no change and 11 seeing a decrease. These associations do not prove causality, as the data did not account for external factors. However, the CFPB's previous rigorous evaluation of financial coaching services previously found meaningful and statistically significant increases in clients' money management; objective financial health metrics like savings balances, debt levels, and credit scores; and subjective feelings of financial confidence and financial well-being.<sup>13</sup> Overall, the Financial Coaching Initiative contributes to a growing

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<sup>12</sup> Client progress was tracked using the 5-item Financial Capability Scale (FCS), which was developed by the University of Wisconsin Madison Center for Financial Security. More information is available at [fyi.extension.wisc.edu/financialcoaching/measures](https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/financialcoaching/measures).

<sup>13</sup> [Financial Coaching: A Strategy to Improve Financial Well-Being](#) describes the results of the earlier CFPB-led evaluation of financial coaching.

body of information that suggests that financial coaching is a promising way to help clients reach their financial goals and improve their financial situation.

## 5.6 Working with a coach more than once is associated with better outcomes, but one-time meetings may be valuable for many clients

The more sessions clients attended, the more their FCS scores tended to increase. Because clients entered coaching with different goals and expectations, a significant percentage of clients met with a financial coach only once. One theory is that this is especially true for clients who are looking for specific guidance, tools, or information, rather than long-term coaching relationships. In these cases, coaches and clients may quickly identify key financial goals and discuss supports and actionable steps. For short-term engagements, coaches may focus on helping clients meet immediate needs and informing them of free services to draw on in the future. Data recorded by the coaches indicates that even one session can help clients take meaningful actions toward their financial goals and, in some cases, even complete short-term goals. In addition, The CFPB's earlier evaluation of financial coaching, which used a follow-up survey to track participants' in the months after coaching, found evidence of positive effects from a single coaching session.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> [Financial Coaching: A Strategy to Improve Financial Well-Being](#) describes the results of the earlier CFPB-led evaluation of financial coaching.

# 6. Conclusion

The CFPB's Financial Coaching Initiative provided over 23,000 consumers with one-on-one financial coaching services to help them navigate financial choices and challenges. Based on the data collected by coaches, the Initiative helped clients achieve financial goals and increase their financial capability. For consumers making a big change in their lives—like starting a new job, beginning to save for a life goal, or a servicemember leaving active duty status—in-person, individualized money management guidance can help them make sound financial decisions for their future.

The Initiative also provides us with lessons on how to implement a coaching program across a diverse set of communities and organizations. Lessons learned from the Financial Coaching Initiative include the following:

1. Financial coaching was successfully integrated into a diverse range of organizations
2. Outreach and marketing skills were critical to each coach's success
3. Coaches needed both coaching skills and financial subject matter expertise
4. Clients preferred to meet in-person for their first coaching session, but coaches used a variety of communication methods for subsequent meetings
5. Financial coaching is associated with increases in clients' financial capability

The Financial Coaching Initiative, along with the CFPB's previous rigorous research on financial coaching, demonstrate that this effective strategy has the potential to help consumers in navigating their financial lives. Appendix D lists CFPB resources for practitioners and organizations interested in financial coaching.

# Appendix A: Host organizations

Each organization that hosted a financial coach was categorized based on its predominant target population, initially either veterans or economically vulnerable consumers. Over time, some “hybrid” sites were created that marketed their services to both target populations. The total number of sites listed exceeds 60 because some sites closed, opened, or consolidated as the program progressed. Table 7 lists all of the organizations that hosted a financial coach, their state, and their target population.

**TABLE 7:** FINANCIAL COACHING HOST SITES

Host organization	State	Target population
The Advocate Program	FL	Veteran
ARIZONA@WORK	AZ	Veteran
Arlington Employment Center	VA	Hybrid
California State University, Northridge	CA	Hybrid
California Veterans Legal Task Force	CA	Veteran
CareerSource Central Florida	FL	Veteran
CareerSource Tampa Bay	FL	Veteran
CareerSource Research Coast	FL	Veteran
CASH Campaign of Maryland	MD	Hybrid
Catholic Charities, Diocese of Camden	NJ	Economically vulnerable
Catholic Community Services of Utah	UT	Hybrid
Central States SER, Jobs for Progress Inc.	IL	Economically vulnerable
Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Workforce Development Board	OH	Veteran
Cobb County Workforce Development Center	GA	Hybrid
Community Career Development	CA	Veteran
Concho Valley Workforce Development Board	TX	Veteran
Covenant Community Capital	TX	Economically vulnerable
CrescentCare	LA	Economically vulnerable
Eastern Maine Development Corporation - Downeast Community Partners	ME	Economically vulnerable
Franklin County Veterans Services Office	OH	Veteran
Goodwill Industries of Arkansas	AR	Economically vulnerable
Goodwill Industries of Tulsa	OK	Economically vulnerable
Grand Island American Job Center	NE	Veteran
Granite United Way	NH	Economically vulnerable
Gulfport WIN Job Center	MS	Veteran
Heartland Workforce Solutions American Job Center	NE	Veteran
Hopelink	WA	Economically vulnerable
Jacksonville Veteran Site	FL	Veteran

<b>Host organization</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Target population</b>
Las Vegas Veteran Site	NV	Veteran
Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia	DC	Economically vulnerable
The Lord's Place	FL	Economically vulnerable
Louisville Metro Neighborhood Place	KY	Hybrid
Macomb/St. Clair Michigan Works	MI	Veteran
Memphis Area Legal Services	TN	Economically vulnerable
Metropolitan Family Service	IL	Economically vulnerable
Mississippi Center for Justice	MS	Economically vulnerable
Nashville Financial Empowerment Center	TN	Veteran
New Hampshire Employment Security	NH	Veteran
North Seattle WorkSource	WA	Veteran
OhioMeansJobs Stark and Tuscarawas Counties	OH	Veteran
Onslow County NCWorks Career Center	NC	Veteran
Pacific Asian Consortium in Employment-PACE	CA	Economically vulnerable
Patchogue Workforce New York Career Center	NY	Veteran
PathWays PA	PA	Hybrid
Pikes Peak Workforce Center	CO	Veteran
Prosperity Connection	MO	Hybrid
Providence netWORKri	RI	Veteran
Resident Services Corporation of DeKalb	GA	Hybrid
San Bernardino County Workforce Investment Board	CA	Veteran
SC Works Greenville	SC	Veteran
Southeast Michigan Community Alliance (SEMCA) Michigan Works!	MI	Veteran
St. Philip's College Good Samaritan Veterans Outreach and Transition Center	TX	Veteran
Tidewater Community College	VA	Veteran
University of Wisconsin-Extension	WI	Hybrid
USO Pathfinder Transition Program		Veteran
Ventura County Human Services Agency	CA	Veteran
Virginia Cooperative Extension - Arlington County	VA	Hybrid
Volunteer Lawyers Network	MN	Economically vulnerable
Workforce 1 Career Center	NY	Veteran
Workforce Connections - Las Vegas	NV	Veteran
Workforce Development Board of Contra Costa County	CA	Veteran
Workforce Development Center Waipahu Office	HI	Hybrid
Workforce Resource Center of Santa Barbara	CA	Veteran
WorkForce West Virginia	WV	Veteran
WorkOne Northeast - Allen County	IN	Veteran
The WorkPlace	CT	Veteran

# Appendix B: Training and certification of coaches

A key element of the Financial Coaching Initiative was the development and refinement of its training, certification, and professional development components. The CFPB sought to define and clarify the role of a financial coach and follow a training and credentialing regime that provided a consistent and rigorous framework for developing coaches' professional skillsets. To achieve this, the Financial Coaching Initiative relied on coaching techniques developed by Sage Financial Solutions. The CFPB and AFSC also required coaches to obtain credentials in financial counseling and financial coaching.

Coaches in the Initiative were required to complete two certifications offered by the Association for Financial Counseling and Planning Education (AFCPE), the Accredited Financial Counselor (AFC) certification and the Financial Fitness Coach (FFC) certification. The latter was established and validated by Sage Financial Solutions, and in collaboration with the AFCPE became an AFCPE certification. The FFC certification was designed to focus on the tools particular to financial coaching, especially its collaborative client-focused nature, and the AFC that provided the content-based knowledge of financial topics.

According to the AFC candidate handbook, an AFC-certified coach or counselor needs to have the tools to educate clients on financial principles, help them overcome debt, modify harmful money management behaviors, guide clients to develop effective strategies for achieving financial goals, support them through financial challenges, and help them develop new perspectives about the dynamics of money relative to family, friends, and the self.

The curriculum included educational requirements, an examination evaluating the knowledge and skills required for certification, 1,000 hours of experiential learning, and a packet submission consisting of an agreement to the AFC code of ethics and three letters of reference attesting to professional competence and experience.

The Financial Fitness Coach training included coaching essentials that covered the core skills of financial coaching (including ethics and standards), establishing rapport with clients, coaching presence, active listening, powerful questioning, direct communication, creating awareness, planning and goal setting, and managing progress and accountability. The training also included a coaching applications course that explored individual topics in more detail and provided opportunities to engage with other coaches. FFC Certification included the following requirements:

- 10 hours of classroom learning (in person or online)
- 20 hours of additional classroom learning through two-hour webinar-based learning labs, Documentation of 20 practice hours
- Receipt of the AFC
- A final evaluation of coaching skills through an assessment of a video or audio recording submitted by the coach

AFCS's training approach developed over time, based on ongoing communication with and feedback from coaches. AFSC contracted with Sage Financial Systems to facilitate the introductory core training, provide learning labs on coach activities and topics, and support coaches through the Financial Fitness Coach certification process. Sage staff taught coaches the Sage approach, and subsequent AFSC trainings followed this curriculum.

For ongoing training AFSC management originally relied on a master coach who met with new coaches; scheduled monthly calls with coaches to discuss performance, experiences, challenges, and topics of interest; and assisted coaches with the FFC certification. Coaches also participated in two webinar series, one monthly series produced by the AFCPE in consultation with AFSC's Master Coach on topics identified through coach-master discussions; and a quarterly series led by Sage Financial Solutions focused on other coaching-related topics. Coaches received ongoing training and support from AFSC regarding the administrative data system.

Coaches also had access to monthly small group trainings, which included "triad" (one coach, one client, one observer) practice coaching sessions, case study review and discussion, and deep dives into topics of particular interest. Other refinements were made such as: providing mentoring to coaches, support outreach planning, offer peer learning opportunities, and to train on data systems, resource development, resource toolkits, tele-coaching, and more.

# Appendix C: Data sources

This report draws on information collected by AFSC, the Urban Institute, and the CFPB.

Primary sources include:

- Data that coaches entered into the program’s case management system
- Notes and observations from visits to the host organizations
- Interviews with coaches and clients about their experiences with the coaching process
- Annual, anonymous survey of coaches
- Interviews of coaches and national stakeholders including AFSC management, select teaming partners, and CFPB staff
- CFPB follow-up surveys of host organizations and partner organizations

AFSC collected and maintained the case management data, with the Urban Institute leading all other activities except the last one listed. CFPB staff helped guide the data collection activities—for example, by providing input on which fields to include in the case management system—and regularly monitored the incoming information. Because the information sources were captured in different ways, from different audiences, and at different points in time, the resulting data provided a rich set of data about the Initiative.

This report draws most heavily on the program’s case management system, described in more detail below.

## C.1 Case management system

Coaches entered information about clients and each coaching interaction into a case management system. To meet federal privacy and data security standards, the case management system was created specifically for this program. The system assigned a unique identification number to each client, allowing AFSC to link a single client’s data over time. Coaches used the case management system in their day-to-day work with clients, and AFSC regularly summarized the case management data in reports for the CFPB, coaches, and host organizations.

The main complexity to the case management data is the fact that some of the data fields were collected from all clients while others were not collected at the veteran sites (or from veteran clients at hybrid sites).

Financial coaches at all sites collected information about:

- Each coaching interaction: Date, time, method (in-person, phone, text, etc.), and type (initial, subsequent, more basic follow-up, or final)
- The client's veteran status (yes/no)
- Clients' financial goals, planned actions, and progress

Demographic characteristics were collected from all clients at sites serving economically vulnerable clients and from non-veteran clients at hybrid sites. These fields were not used at the veteran sites or for veteran clients at hybrid sites. Demographics included clients':

- Age
- Marital status
- Educational attainment
- Number of children and dependents
- Race and ethnicity

All coaches at sites serving economically vulnerable clients entered clients' responses to the Financial Capability Scale (FCS), a five-question survey that measures clients' financial behavior and confidence, into the case management system.<sup>15</sup> Coaches at veteran sites had access to the FCS questions but were not required to use them with clients. Coaches at hybrid sites used the FCS with non-veteran clients but were not required to do so with veterans.

To complete the FCS, coaches asked clients the following questions:

- Whether they had a personal budget, spending plan, or financial plan
- How confident they were in their ability to achieve a financial goal
- Whether they had money put away for an emergency or unexpected expense
- Whether their spending on living expenses was less than their total income
- Whether they had been charged a late fee on a loan or bill in the last 30 days

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<sup>15</sup> The Financial Capability Scale was developed by the University of Wisconsin Madison Center for Financial Security. More information is available at [fyi.extension.wisc.edu/financialcoaching/measures](https://fyi.extension.wisc.edu/financialcoaching/measures).

Clients' responses to the five questions were combined into a single FCS score ranging from zero to seven. Higher FCS scores indicate greater financial capability. Clients' progress was tracked using both their overall FCS scores and their responses to the individual questions.

# Appendix D: CFPB financial coaching resources

## *Reports about financial coaching*

- [Financial Coaching: A Strategy to Improve Financial Well-Being](#) describes the results of an earlier CFPB-led evaluation of financial coaching. The evaluation found that financial coaching resulted in improvements in money management, objective financial health metrics, and subjective feelings of financial confidence.
- [Implementing Financial Coaching: Implications for Practitioners](#) shares insights from the evaluation into how to implement financial coaching.
- [Financial Coaching: Advancing the field to better serve consumers](#) summarizes a CFPB-led Financial Coaching Symposium, including key takeaways and possible next steps for the field.

## *Resources for financial coaches and other practitioners to use with clients*

- [Your Money, Your Goals](#) resources equip frontline staff and volunteers in social service organizations with the information and tools they need to provide financial empowerment services to the people they serve. Your Money, Your Goals includes:
  - An in-depth [toolkit](#) with information and tools that help frontline staff, regardless of their expertise in financial issues, talk about money with the people they serve.
  - [Companion guides](#) focused on topics specific to Native communities, reentry, and people with disabilities.
  - [Interactive booklets](#) covering common financial stressors, including Want Credit to Work for You, Behind on Bills, Debt Getting in Your Way, and Building Your Savings.
  - [Videos to spark action](#) that introduce concepts from the toolkit. Frontline staff and volunteers can then follow up with tools or handouts tied directly to those concepts.
  - [Online resources](#) referenced in the Your Money, Your Goals materials are listed on a single page to make them easier to access and share.
- [Financial well-being resources](#) define financial well-being and include a toolkit about how to measure it, national survey findings on financial well-being, and more.

- [Take control of your auto loan](#) helps consumers navigate the auto financing process, including budgeting considerations, understanding the auto finance options, shopping for an auto loan, negotiating and closing the deal.
- [Check your credit report](#) shows free ways to check a credit report to find and fix mistakes, update information, and guard against identity theft.
- [Understand your credit score](#) explains how banks, credit card companies and other businesses use credit scores to estimate how likely a consumer is to repay money borrowed.
- [How to rebuild your credit](#) outlines steps that can help consumers recover from a financial challenge that hurt their credit.
- [Financial rules to live by worksheets](#) help consumers develop financial rules of thumb that are based on their own financial situations. These rules can help consumers commit to taking action: savings, checking your credit report, credit card spending, and spending and budgeting.
- [Checking account guides](#) help consumers select a checking account product that is suited to their financial needs.
- [Consumer tips for managing spending](#) provides ideas on how consumers can track their spending, create a budget, decide how much to spend, and get feedback on their spending.

To explore other resources for financial coaches, go [to consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools](https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/educator-tools).