

Background

Financial Empowerment Centers (FECs) offer professional, one-on-one financial counseling as a free public service; the national FEC Public platform looks to grow this movement across the country. Multiple avenues of grant support, intensive technical assistance, and a vibrant national learning community will help as many as 50 local government partners plan, launch, and sustain Financial Empowerment Centers for their residents.

The FEC Public replication strategy is comprised of three distinct phases: (1) Planning; (2) Implementation; and (3) Expert. This application is open to successful Planning partners ready for the Implementation phase.

The FEC model includes the following key tenets of financial counseling:

- Professional, one-on-one and offered as a free public service.
- Systematic data tracking with defined outcomes for client management and counselor service evaluation.
- Connected and integrated into a range of local government and nonprofit service delivery systems.
- Prioritizes sustainability efforts to become a permanent service in the locality.

FEC Operational Summary:

- Program implementation and management is led and overseen by the local government.
- Service provision is conducted by one or more qualified nonprofit partners or local government agencies, procured by, and answerable to, local government.
- All counselors must be trained based on the CFE Fund's training standards and pass a CFE Fund-administered final exam.
- Counselors first conduct financial triage with clients to determine the nature of their financial situation, set goals, and establish a specific plan of action with each client focused in one or more of four primary domains: banking, savings, debt, and credit.
- Client retention, critical to outcome achievement, is prioritized as counselors work with clients to make progress on their action plan.
- Counseling is geared towards client goals and achieving financial stability outcomes.

Proposal Submission Timing

Implementation Proposals will be accepted from successful Planning Grantees on a rolling basis based on their launch timeline, as agreed upon with CFE Fund. Proposals must be submitted through CFE Fund's online grant portal.

Implementation Grant Timeline

- *Build Phase (roughly 3 months):* If selected, the Grantee will coordinate all efforts to prepare for the opening of the FECs, including hiring and training staff, finalizing partnership agreements, and preparing marketing and operations. The three month period is estimated and may vary based on local procurement processes or other factors.
- *Implementation Phase (24 months):* Begin offering services at the FEC. CFE Fund support will be provided for a full twenty-four months of public counseling operations.

Eligibility Checklist

This application is only open to FEC Planning Grantees who have met the following eligibility requirements successfully:

- **Secured a nonprofit provider(s)** who will deliver the financial counseling. The CFE Fund anticipates that the Planning Grantee has gone through the necessary procurement processes at the point of submission to be able to name its intended nonprofit provider(s), although a final contract between the parties need not yet be in place.
 - Nonprofit provider(s) recruit, hire, and supervise the FEC counselors and have a manager overseeing all the work. They are responsible for all data collection and regular reporting to both the local government and the CFE Fund. They support public marketing efforts by participating in outreach events and presentations. In addition, nonprofit providers establish and maintain relationships with other community partners hosting counselors, referral partners, and other outreach and community efforts. Financial Empowerment Center clients must receive all services free of charge, and may not be “upsold” to additional fee-based services. At locations where the provider offers other services with fees, pricing structures must be clear and transparent, and it must be made clear that Financial Empowerment Center services are public and entirely free. **Note: This provider role can also be fulfilled by a local government agency.*
- **Designed a training plan** for managers and counselors based on the CFE Fund’s Training Standards; and **identified or secured training partners** who can fulfill all aspects of these Standards;
- **Hired or have plan to hire a dedicated FEC Local Government Manager**, who may either be an existing local government staff member or a new hire. The CFE Fund anticipates that hiring will be based on each Planning Grantees personnel processes and will accept information on a confirmed manager or a plan for hiring the manager.
 - This person will manage the operations of the overall initiative including programmatic design, implementation, nonprofit provider partnership, integration partnerships, reporting, and serve as the main point of contact for FEC providers, local government leadership, and funders.
- **Secured match funds** to access implementation match funds from the CFE Fund. The CFE Fund support will include a 1:1 match of \$150,000 in the first year, and a 1:2 match of \$100,000 in the second year. At the point of submitting this application, the Planning Grantee must have committed funding for Year 1 (totaling approximately \$150,000) and be able to demonstrate a high likelihood of securing Year 2 funding (totaling approximately \$200,000) in order to receive the match funds from CFE Fund. The CFE Fund’s Year 1 funding will be available for the Build Phase. Please note that this is a two-year opportunity; applicants must be in a position to make a two-year commitment to the FECs with the expectation that the program will continue beyond these grant terms. The CFE Fund will provide match funds directly to the local government or a designated fiscal sponsor, but not directly to the nonprofit provider(s).
 - Match funds can only include cash contributions (which includes new dollars secured or existing dollars allocated for the program). An example of existing dollars is allocating either the full amount or a portion of a current employee’s salary to FEC work; or repurposing open staff lines for the FEC work. The CFE Fund also encourages partners to identify in-kind contributions (use of facilities, services, equipment, etc.), but notes that these are not eligible for match fund grant requirements.



- **Identified or secured programmatic partnerships** within a range of services and locations. The FECs are expected to launch with a minimum of 8 partnerships with the expectation that this network will grow as the initiative progresses. These partners are crucial to integrating the FEC services into the service streams of local government and nonprofit agencies, especially those serving people with low and moderate incomes. At their best, these partnerships deeply integrate financial counseling and coaching into local government and nonprofit programs and are designed also to advance those programs' goals. Potential complementary program linkages could include homeownership assistance, homeless prevention, foreclosure prevention, workforce development, returning citizen, asset building, financial access, domestic violence prevention, or other social services.

Implementation Grant Expectations

If selected for an Implementation Grant, the Grantee will be expected to carry out the following objectives, with a more detailed scope of work to be included in the grant contract:

- Implement the FEC initiative in accordance with the model requirements provided by the CFE Fund, including but not limited to, free one-on-one counseling, integration with a range of services, counselor training, partnership between the local government and nonprofit counseling providers, etc.;
- Use the CFE Fund's FEC counseling database for at least the duration of the grant;
- Monitor and track the service delivered and provide program management reports to the CFE Fund;
- Meet designated targets both for number of new clients and client sessions;
- Adhere to CFE Fund branding guidelines for the FECs;
- Raise citywide awareness of the FECs and coordinate with partners on targeted outreach efforts; and
- Participate in the CFE Fund's National FEC learning community with other FEC partners from across the map.

CFE Fund Technical Assistance

During the course of the engagement, the CFE Fund team will support grantees on a range of activities, including developing local partner capacity, supporting the local launch efforts, providing assistance on meeting key grant benchmarks and outcomes, communications and press, sustainability planning, and other areas as needed.

The CFE Fund will:

- Lead regular calls and be available via email to support all efforts to build the FECs and support efforts once the FEC is launched;
- Facilitate a series of trainings for all relevant staff members (managers and counselors) on the FEC model, the database, and other applicable topics;
- Make at least one site visit during the Implementation phase;
- Host learning community activities; and
- Provide access to a range of technical assistance resources, including fundraising templates, operations manuals, and more.

Expert Mentorship

The selected Implementation Grantees will continue to work with their Expert mentor. During the Build and Implementation phases, this will include one visit from the Expert partner and the Expert partner will play host for one day to allow new FEC staff members to observe and shadow its local counselors.