Annual Report to Congress

Strategy for Assuring Financial Empowerment (SAFE) Report

FY 2022



Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Strategy for Assuring Financial Empowerment (SAFE) Report

Financial Literacy and Education Commission

Department of the Treasury (Treasury), Chair

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), Vice Chair

Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (FRB)

Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC)

Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Department of Defense (DoD)

Department of Education (ED)

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Department of the Interior (DOI)

Department of Labor (DOL)

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA)

Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

General Services Administration (GSA)

National Credit Union Administration (NCUA)

Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC)

Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)

Small Business Administration (SBA)

Social Security Administration (SSA)

White House Domestic Policy Council (DPC)

FY 2022 Strategy for Assuring Financial Empowerment (SAFE) Report

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Introduction

The Strategy for Assuring Financial Empowerment (SAFE) Report highlights the actions taken by the agencies represented on the Financial Literacy and Education Commission (FLEC) in fiscal year (FY) 2022 in furtherance of the FLEC mission. Continuing its strategic focus to coordinate, support, and encourage federal government efforts to improve financial literacy and education, the FLEC is committed to serving as a thought leader and partner in public and private sector efforts to improve Americans' financial knowledge, skills, and decision-making and to empower Americans to use these abilities to enhance their financial well-being.

In FY 2022, the FLEC welcomed its newest represented agency, the Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA). FHFA supports the national housing finance market through its regulated entities, the Government-Sponsored Enterprises, and provides a unique and additive perspective to the FLEC. FHFA is committed to empowering homeowners, especially first-time homebuyers and those from underserved communities, by fostering housing finance markets that promote equitable access to affordable and sustainable housing, and promoting financial literacy to inform consumers and support effective financial decision-making.

The FLEC completed several significant projects in FY 2022. Responding to a report recommendation in the March 2022 White House Executive Order on Ensuring Responsible Development of Digital Assets, the FLEC formed a Digital Assets Working Group to strengthen the internal knowledge of FLEC represented agencies regarding the rapidly growing and evolving digital asset ecosystem. Led by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) and Treasury's Office of Consumer Policy (OCP), which coordinates and manages the FLEC activities, the Working Group hosted experts for a seminar series on digital assets and created a crypto-assets resource webpage on MyMoney.gov. MyMoney.gov is a consumer-facing website that serves as a clearinghouse of information about federal financial literacy and education programs.

In FY 2022, OCP, with support and guidance from the FLEC, made significant progress in the development of a comprehensive report concerning the impacts of climate hazards on the financial well-being of American households. The report is a unique resource for consumers and policymakers that presents a comprehensive summary of the various pathways through which climate hazards impact household finances and recommends steps to build financial resilience.

In FY 2022, the FLEC hosted three public meetings. The first meeting on March 8, 2022, included a presentation by the U.S. Department of Energy on household energy costs as well as a discussion, led by the CFTC, on financial education efforts regarding crypto-assets. The second meeting, on July 14, 2022, provided an update on financial literacy efforts by the DoD. The meeting also included a conversation on <u>USDA Extension</u> education (which provides non-formal education and learning activities to farmers and other residents of rural communities as well as to people living in urban areas). The third meeting, on November 17, 2022, welcomed the FHFA as the newest FLEC represented agency. The meeting also provided updates on federal student aid,

the FLEC work on climate hazards, and the implications of developments in crypto-assets for consumers, investors, and businesses.^{1,2}

Finally, in FY 2022, the FLEC made multiple updates to <u>MyMoney.gov</u>, including updating the higher education financial education resources available to the public and creating a crypto-assets webpage to serve as a central source for the posting of crypto-asset financial education resources available to the public.

Background on the Financial Literacy and Education Commission

The FLEC was established by the <u>Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003</u> to "improve the financial literacy and education of persons in the United States through the development of a national strategy to promote financial literacy and education." The FLEC's key responsibilities include the following:

- **Hold three public meetings per year** to coordinate and promote financial literacy and education among federal agencies.
- Publish the annual Strategy for Assuring Financial Empowerment (SAFE) Report, which updates Congress on the progress of the FLEC in carrying out its mandate.
- Implement and regularly update the National Strategy to Promote Financial Literacy and Education among all American consumers.
- Manage the MyMoney.gov resource webpage, which is a consumer-facing website that serves as a clearinghouse of information about federal financial literacy and education programs.

The FLEC is composed of the heads of 23 federal agencies and the White House Domestic Policy Council. It is chaired by the Secretary of the Treasury. The Vice Chair is the Director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

The FLEC provides a forum for its represented federal agencies and the White House Domestic Policy Council to coordinate their efforts to advance financial literacy and education, and to develop consumer-friendly, trustworthy, and consistent educational materials, tools, and outreach efforts to help consumers make informed, sound decisions that enhance their financial well-being.

¹ Exec. Order 14076, 87 Fed. Reg. 14,143 (Mar. 14, 2022), https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/07/08/2022-14588/ensuring-responsible-development-of-digital-assets-request-for-comment.

² U.S. Department of the Treasury, Crypto-Assets: Implications for Consumers, Investors, and Businesses (Sept 16, 2022), https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/CryptoAsset_EO5.pdf.

^{3 20} U.S.C. § 9702(b).

FLEC Agency Activities

This report highlights the relevant activities of the FLEC represented agencies in promoting financial literacy and education. The FLEC represented agencies engage in diverse activities, in line with their distinct agency missions, to advance this goal. This report groups those activities across three broad categories: general financial literacy and education (including consumer protection and fraud prevention and financial education); key consumer finance issues and trends (housing, retirement, COVID-19 recovery, crypto-assets); and special populations (youth, Tribal and Native communities, and military members and families).

Department of the Treasury (Treasury) (Secretary Yellen, Chair)

In FY 2022, Treasury published multiple reports, provided outreach and education services, and took steps to further enhance existing programs as part of its efforts to advance consumer financial literacy and education.

Crypto-Assets

On September 16, 2022, the Treasury Department issued three reports pursuant to President Biden's March 9 Executive Order 14067 on Ensuring Responsible Development of Digital Assets. The Treasury reports, The Future of Money and Payments; Crypto-Assets: Implications for Consumers, Investors, and Businesses; and Action Plan to Address Illicit Financing Risks of Digital Assets, provide an overview of the operation and uses of digital assets, the role of payments in the financial system and the emergence of nonbank payment systems, a discussion of the potential risks and benefits of a U.S. central bank digital currency (CBDC), and an assessment of the potential use of digital assets in illicit finance.

The <u>Crypto-Assets: Implications for Consumers, Investors, and Businesses report also</u> included a recommendation that the FLEC Digital Asset Working Group coordinate and promote consumer education efforts on crypto-assets, including information on risks of fraud, theft, and scams, how to report unlawful practices, and risks associated with crypto investment. The report suggested that the FLEC consider how to use existing surveys and data collection to identify how crypto investment is used by populations vulnerable to disparate impact, and to engage and learn from crypto stakeholders about how to coordinate public and private strategies for education and outreach. To accomplish this, the Digital Asset Working Group held listening sessions with over 30 stakeholders on 13 topics and reviewed the existing consumer finance surveys conducted by the FLEC represented agencies.

Internal Revenue Service (IRS) / Department of the Treasury

Through the Stakeholder Partnerships, Education & Communication (SPEC) office, in FY 2022 the IRS provided outreach and education services to the public, including free tax preparation and outreach programs at sites throughout the nation. SPEC delivered this taxpayer assistance through a three-pronged business model of free volunteer income tax return preparation,

education and outreach, and <u>Financial Education and Asset Building</u> (FEAB) information and services offered to taxpayers. SPEC leverages its ability to benefit millions of taxpayers by partnering with organizations on the national and local level to deliver most of its programs and services.

The Taxpayer First Act brought about many changes, including making the <u>Volunteer Income</u> <u>Tax Assistance</u> matching grant program permanent. Grant funds may also be used for services related to financial education, asset development and the establishment of savings accounts in connection with tax return preparation.

SPEC's accomplishments in FY 2022 included leveraging "Tax Time" through their partners as a gateway to connect individuals and families to FEAB programs and services, expediting refunds to taxpayers through direct deposit while supporting taxpayers who wish to split their refund into multiple accounts, promoting savings bonds and split refunds for taxpayers and offering over-the-phone interpreter (OPI) services through partners to clients who do not speak English. Language services are permitted for tax preparation as well as FEAB.

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) (Director Chopra, Vice Chair)

Languages

The CFPB develops programs and resources to address incomplete and often asymmetric information about financial services, products, and practices provided to consumers by consumer financial service providers. The CFPB also conducts programs and activities focused on financial security and inclusion for special populations: servicemembers, older consumers, underserved consumers and communities, students and young adults, and limited English proficient (LEP) consumers. In FY 2022, the CFPB played a pivotal role in providing resources and assistance to a wide audience of 21.3 million consumers.

The CFPB offers materials translated into eight languages for LEP consumers, which are distributed by both the CFPB and others who serve LEP consumers. The publications provide straightforward information about money management and other financial issues.

To further enhance financial literacy and accessibility, the CFPB developed <u>glossaries</u> that translated common financial terms into multiple languages, including Spanish, Chinese (Traditional), Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Korean.⁴

Financial Education and Capability

The CFPB promoted various initiatives to educate and assist consumers in navigating financial products and services. One such resource is <u>Ask CFPB</u>, an online educational tool that offers authoritative and clear answers to consumers' inquiries on a wide range of money-related topics ranging from home mortgages and auto loans to credit reports, debt collection, and student loans.

⁴ The compilation of terms for these updated glossaries was sourced from various entities such as the FHFA, HUD, IRS, Department of Justice, FDIC, FTC, SSA, Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae, GSA, and National Association of Hispanic Real Estate Professionals.

The CFPB <u>Financial Education Exchange</u> (FinEx) serves as a platform for sharing research, tools, publications, and resources with financial practitioners who provide financial literacy and coaching services to adult consumers. This program facilitates discussions and gathers feedback from financial educators, fostering collaboration and continuous improvement. Over the course of FY 2022, the engaged community of financial practitioners grew by 69%, totaling 59,054 members.

To support consumer savings during tax season, in FY 2022, the CFPB provided technical assistance and materials to Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites and private tax preparers. Collaborating with 70 VITA and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs, the CFPB offered resources and guidance to help these organizations adapt to virtual service environments and develop strategies to promote consumer savings at tax time.

Military and Veteran

The CFPB partnered with military and veteran service organizations to expand awareness of the protections in the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA) and Military Lending Act (MLA). The CFPB also sought to inform and protect servicemembers from abuses of the military allotment system, protecting servicemembers from costly auto loans and wrongful repossessions, protecting housing rights of servicemembers, ensuring servicemembers take advantage of expanded student loan forgiveness, and further enhancing and increasing understanding of credit and consumer reporting issues among servicemembers.

The CFPB's Office of Servicemember Affairs published an annual report on the top financial concerns facing servicemembers, veterans, and military families, based on the complaints they submitted to the CFPB.⁵ Servicemembers told the CFPB about billing inaccuracies and related that debt collectors used aggressive tactics to recover allegedly unpaid medical bills. Servicemembers also reported failures by credit reporting companies in helping to resolve inaccuracies and other credit reporting issues.

The CFPB updated its Military Financial Lifecycle model, which is a representation of a military career beginning at the signing of an enlistment contract or Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) commitment, through the subsequent steps in an individual's and family's military career and life.⁶ The CFPB offers web resources and related materials that provide targeted information and links to CFPB tools that help servicemembers and their families address the financial challenges that arise at the various stages of their military lives. Some of these challenges are unique to servicemembers, such as frequent and often unanticipated moves, deployments, long periods of separation from family, difficulty for spouses to maintain career tracks, and mobilization for members of the Reserve and National Guard. The CFPB also provides information and resources to help servicemembers as they transition from military to civilian life.

⁵ CFPB, Office of Servicemember Affairs Annual Report (Jun. 2022), https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_osa-annual-report-2021.pdf.

⁶ CFPB, Office of Servicemember Affairs 2022 Annual Report (Jun. 20, 2023), <a href="https://www.consumerfinance.gov/data-research/researc

Older Americans

During National Family Caregivers Month, the CFPB's Office for Older Americans released a <u>new guide</u> to help family members and friends of people living in nursing homes and assisted living communities learn how to prevent and report elder financial abuse. The guide, which can be downloaded for free, lists red flags to watch for, shares some common scenarios, and includes resources people can use to help their loved ones. The CFPB also released a <u>quick reference</u> handout that is focused on how to report elder financial abuse.

During Residents' Rights Month, the CFPB released an updated version of <u>Preventing elder financial abuse: A guide for nursing homes and assisted living communities</u> to help long-term care staff prevent and respond to financial exploitation of the people in their care. This updated guide walks team members through the four steps to fighting elder financial abuse: Prevent, Recognize, Record, and Report. The update includes new information on using technology to stay connected and informed, along with new scenarios and resources developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The guide is for assisted living community and nursing home managers and staff who can step in to help people who are experiencing financial abuse.

Student/Youth Education

Building upon the CFPB's research on adult financial well-being, the CFPB expanded its focus to include childhood origins of financial capability and well-being. By examining the developmental stages of childhood and adolescence, the research aimed to identify when and where individuals acquire the foundational attributes and abilities that contribute to adult financial capability. This approach highlighted the importance of nurturing financial knowledge and skills throughout a person's growth, recognizing that these building blocks lay the groundwork for future financial well-being. To put this research into practice, the CFPB created a website interface that is robust, appealing, easy to use, and has strong search capabilities, including downloadable activities for K-12 educators, a curriculum review tool, and a story book series for youth ages 3-12, among other resources.

Through its commitment to enhancing financial education from an early age and promoting equitable access to financial services, the CFPB continues to empower individuals with the knowledge and tools necessary for their financial well-being. By addressing the developmental stages of financial capability and advocating for language accessibility, the CFPB strives to create a more inclusive and informed financial landscape for all consumers.

Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (FRB)

Financial Education and Capability

In FY 2022, the FRB highlighted its <u>U.S. Currency Education Program (CEP)</u>. The CEP educates businesses and consumers about the security and design of Federal Reserve notes as well as providing public access to education, training, and information about Federal Reserve Notes.

Research

In FY 2022, FRB published research reports and resources on topics related to consumer finance and protection. These include the following:

- Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2021
- Consumers and Guaranteed Asset Protection (GAP Protection) on Vehicle Financing Contracts: A First Look
- Household Financial Decision-Making After Natural Disasters: Evidence from Hurricane Harvey
- Revisiting the Effect of Education on Later Life Health
- Young Borrowers' Usage of Cosigned Credit Cards and Long Run Outcomes
- Declining Affordability and Home Purchase Borrowing by Lower Income Households
- Saving and Wealth Accumulation among Student Loan Borrowers: Implications for Retirement Preparedness

Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC)

Consumer Protection and Fraud Prevention

In FY 2022, CFTC organized <u>Dating or Defrauding?</u> a monthlong awareness-raising campaign that coincided with the Valentine's Day holiday and involved 10 federal agencies, including law enforcement.⁷ The campaign provided an ongoing anti-fraud social-media messaging from February 7 through March 11, as well as a landing page of government resources. In all, the effort achieved a total reach of more than 205,000 views, impressions and engagements from social media, email marketing, and other bilingual campaign platforms. The campaign also reached approximately 71,000 people through two USA.gov email deliveries, which generated more than 1,300 clicks to campaign materials and resources. Approximately 30 news outlets and websites ran stories about the campaign and the issue of romance frauds that rely on social media, dating apps, and digital assets to steal from victims.

Crypto-Assets

The CFTC participated in <u>Cryptocurrency: How It Works, Current Research, and Avoiding Scams</u> hosted by the Military Families Learning Network. Additionally, the CFTC organized an event titled <u>Introduction to Cryptocurrency and Avoiding Digital Assets Scams</u> as part of the Howard County Money Matters program.

Financial Education and Capability

In FY 2022, the CFTC witnessed significant growth in online engagement and participation in virtual events. The traffic to CFTC.gov's <u>Learn & Protect</u> section experienced a substantial increase of 54.5% compared to the previous year. Notably, web sessions for educational articles and customer advisories on the website saw an impressive surge of 98%. Additionally, visits

Participating in the <u>Dating or Defrauding?</u> social media messaging campaign were the CFTC, CFPB, FDIC, Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, FTC, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and U.S. Postal Inspection Service. The effort was further supported by the GSA, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and DoD's Office of Financial Readiness (FINRED).

to information regarding <u>intermediary registrations</u> for checking purposes grew by 35%. The <u>Registration Deficient (RED) List</u>⁸ sessions, which provide information on unregistered offshore entities offering products or services that require registration, also experienced a notable increase of 22.3%.

Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Financial Education and Capability

Throughout FY 2022, USDA implemented various initiatives aimed at supporting underserved producers and promoting financial resilience in households and communities. These efforts reflect the USDA's commitment to ensuring the well-being and economic stability of individuals and communities across the nation.

One notable announcement in FY 2022 was the establishment of the <u>American Rescue Plan Technical Assistance</u> Partnerships. This initiative specifically targeted underserved producers, providing them with the necessary resources and guidance to navigate the challenges they face. By offering tailored technical assistance, the USDA aimed to empower these producers and enable them to thrive in the agricultural sector.

Recognizing the importance of crop insurance in safeguarding agricultural livelihoods, the USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA) <u>invested</u> \$3.3 million in two new partnerships during FY 2022. These partnerships focused on expanding outreach efforts to underserved producers, ensuring that they have access to vital information and support regarding crop insurance. By enhancing their understanding of risk management tools, underserved producers were better equipped to protect their crops and mitigate potential losses.

The USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) collaborated with the University of Arkansas Research & Extension to <u>promote Financial Security</u> in households and communities. This work aimed to strengthen America's overall financial resilience by providing individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively navigate financial challenges.

Additionally, in coordination with extension services and nonprofit organizations, NIFA focused on <u>educating America's youth about money management</u>. These collaborative efforts aimed to equip young individuals with the foundational skills and habits necessary for their future financial success. By instilling sound financial values and practices in youth, the USDA aimed to expand their opportunities and set them on a path towards lifelong financial well-being.

Department of Defense (DoD)

Military and Veteran

In FY 2022, the DoD made significant efforts to strengthen the economic security and financial well-being of its total force, including service members and their families. These initiatives

⁸ Per the RED List disclaimer: "The inclusion of an entity's name on the RED List does not mean that the CFTC or a court has concluded that a violation of any provision of the Commodity Exchange Act or the Commission's Regulations has occurred."

aimed to alleviate challenges resulting from the pandemic, enhance financial readiness resources, and promote overall financial resilience within the military community.

In November 2021, the Secretary of Defense released the <u>Strengthening Economic Security</u> memo which outlined the Department's commitment to supporting financial well-being of the total force. The memo called on leaders to take immediate action to address housing cost increases, food insecurity, and other challenges faced by service members and their families. It emphasized the importance of providing relief and stability, extending tour lengths, and expanding financial readiness resources, including financial counseling and spouse employment support.

To track the impact of financial conditions, behavior, and knowledge among service members, the DoD conducted the Status of Forces Survey. This comprehensive survey gathered data from active duty, National Guard, and reserve service members. Results and analysis from the 2020 survey were reported to Congress and made publicly available in April 2022. The survey was expanded to collect more data on food insecurity, aligning with efforts to promote economic security within the military population.

From July to September 2022, an updated <u>Status of Forces Survey</u> was administered, providing insights into the financial literacy and preparedness of active and reserve component personnel during that period. The results are expected to be included in a Report to Congress scheduled for late 2023.

In July 2022, the DoD released a <u>roadmap to strengthen food security</u> within the force. This roadmap outlined targeted policies, programs, and initiatives to understand and address the causes and challenges associated with food insecurity in the military community. It emphasized the importance of financial education and counseling resources and aimed to increase awareness and utilization of these resources among service members. The DoD also launched a <u>self-guided financial well-being assessment</u> for service members. This tool helped individuals assess their financial well-being and identify appropriate resources to strengthen their financial health. To support the launch, the DoD created a comprehensive campaign with articles, blogs, flyers, and videos. Unique resources were tailored for different audiences, including service members, leaders, and service providers.

To further enhance financial education and support, the DoD expanded its <u>Sen\$e app</u>. The app included new touchpoints and courses aligned with the Secretary of Defense's "Taking Care of Our People" guidance. The housing touchpoint was updated to address the current housing climate, providing relevant content to service members and their families. This expansion aimed to provide comprehensive financial resources to effectively address financial challenges.

To expand outreach and dissemination of financial readiness content, the DoD launched three tailored financial readiness eNewsletters in 2022. The Your Military Money eNewsletter targeted service members and their families, helping them achieve personal financial readiness. The MilSpouse Money Mission eNewsletter aimed to educate and empower military spouses to make informed financial decisions. The Military Financial Service Provider eNewsletter aimed to

assist financial service providers in delivering exceptional financial knowledge and education to service members and their families.

To foster collaboration and coordination, the DoD hosted Financial Readiness Network meetings in April and September 2022. These meetings facilitated connections with federal departments, agencies, and non-federal entities that provide support to service members and their families. Discussions focused on strengthening the economic security of the force, addressing digital assets, federal student loans, financial stress, and psychological well-being.

The DoD carried out various digital campaigns to increase financial literacy and consumer awareness. During Financial Capability Month (April), weekly themes were highlighted, focusing on core financial capabilities, and providing information to motivate service members and their families to take actions to improve their financial well-being. In July 2022, in collaboration with the FTC and CFPB, the DoD conducted the Military Consumer Month digital campaign. This campaign raised awareness of various topics such as scams, consumer protection laws, insurance, warranties, and smart buying.

In support of Credit Education Month (March), the DoD launched a <u>social media challenge</u> to encourage service members to build their financial futures through credit management and available resources. Weekly challenges and supporting resources were provided to help participants improve their credit management skills and make informed credit-related decisions.

To ensure the effectiveness of its financial literacy education efforts, the DoD commissioned a two-year research study to develop measures of effectiveness. This study aimed to guide the improvement of training content and resources provided by the Department's financial readiness programs. The results of the study are expected in Fall 2024.

Research

DoD designed and commissioned a research study to develop measures of effectiveness to guide financial literacy education efforts and assess the effectiveness of training content and resources provided by the Department's financial readiness programs. Results are expected in Fall 2024.

Department of Education (ED)

Consumer Protection and Fraud Prevention

In FY 2022, a dedicated page on the ED website <u>StudentAid.gov</u> provided information on the flexibilities offered to student loan borrowers. Approximately 22.6 million users accessed their information in FY 2022. In FY 2022, ED's Office of Federal Student Aid (FSA), the largest provider of student financial aid in the nation, sent over 230 million emails to its customers on topics such as filling out the <u>Free Application for Federal Student Aid</u> (FAFSA) form and describing the resources available on <u>StudentAid.gov</u>.

Prospective aid recipients must complete the <u>Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)</u> form. In FY 2022, FSA processed over 16.9 million FAFSA forms, resulting in the delivery of

approximately \$111.6 billion in Title IV aid to more than 9.8 million postsecondary students and their families. These students attended over 5,500 active institutions of postsecondary education participating in federal student aid programs.

In August 2022, ED announced a one-time program that would provide up to \$20,000 in relief for low- and middle-income Americans most likely to struggle repaying their student loans. Targeted student debt relief addresses the financial harms of the COVID-19 pandemic, helps smooth borrowers' transition back to repayment, and helps borrowers at highest risk of delinquencies or default once payments resume. Within two months, ED launched a simple online application and a consumer-friendly process for receiving and processing applications. In the first few weeks, around 26 million people successfully applied, with the process typically taking no more than 5 minutes from start to finish.

Student/Youth Education

ED plays a crucial role in supporting student and youth education across the United States. One of the key interactions between ED and students is the process of obtaining federal financial aid. During FY 2022, FSA implemented the <u>Limited Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)</u> Waiver, which helped 360,000 student loan borrowers receive more than \$24 billion in loan relief. Millions more borrowers received additional months of payment credit, bringing them closer to loan forgiveness. To promote the Limited PSLF Waiver, FSA participated in scores of webinars and outreach engagements and created stakeholder toolkits for use by employers, local governments, and other organizations that work with borrowers.

Recognizing the importance of training and guidance, FSA hosted the December 2022 Federal Student Aid Training Conference, which brought together nearly 14,000 participants from across the nation in a virtual format. The conference aimed to provide comprehensive training and updates to professionals involved in the student aid process.

FSA also organized two-day virtual Financial Aid Bootcamps to educate students, parents, guidance counselors, college access professionals, and others on the financial aid process. These bootcamps covered topics such as completing the FAFSA form for the 2022-2023 academic year and utilizing tools like the College Scorecard and Loan Simulator.

The <u>College Scorecard</u>, an online tool, allows consumers to compare the cost and value of higher education institutions in the United States. In FY 2022, the tool received approximately 2 million visits, indicating a growth of 400,000 visits compared to the previous year.

FSA is committed to advancing racial equity and expanding access to higher education for underserved communities. In line with Executive Order 13985, FSA implemented strategies to encourage FAFSA completion, resulting in 7.2 million applications for the 2022-23 school year. These applications included over half a million submissions from non-high school seniors and non-returning students.

⁹ Following these efforts, the Supreme Court issued a decision blocking ED from moving forward with its one-time student debt relief plan. In 2023, the Secretary of Education began efforts to open a path to debt relief using his authority under the Higher Education Act. Federal student loan debt relief will be provided based on the standards and processes establishing under the forthcoming regulations.

Pell Grants play a significant role in supporting low-income and middle-income undergraduate students. In the FY 2022, ED disbursed \$26.1 billion in Pell Grants to approximately 6.0 million students. The average grant amount was approximately \$4,350, and the maximum award increased from \$6,495 in the 2021–22 academic year to \$6,895 in the 2022–23 academic year.

Through initiatives like Project Success, FSA worked to improve student retention, graduation rates, and cohort default rates at 213 minority-serving institutions. This initiative offered free tools, programs, and resources to enhance students' financial literacy and support their higher education goals. The Minority-Serving Under-Resourced Schools Division (MSURSD) within FSA also provided regulatory training and technical assistance to minority-serving institutions.

Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Financial Education and Capability

During FY 2022, the HHS' Office of Head Start (OHS), which resides within HHS' Office of Administration for Children and Families (ACF), recognized the importance of financial literacy and economic well-being and developed various resources and training opportunities for program staff and families.

OHS developed <u>tip sheets</u> on important topics such as unemployment insurance, banking, and managing credit and debt. These tip sheets served as practical guides, offering valuable information and strategies to navigate financial challenges. Additionally, OHS offered regional training sessions upon request, ensuring that Head Start programs had access to specialized training tailored to their specific needs.

To make these resources readily available, OHS housed related materials on the Head Start/Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center's <u>Building Foundations for Economic Mobility</u> webpage. This centralized platform provided a comprehensive collection of resources, including tip sheets, guidelines, and other materials to support financial literacy and economic mobility among Head Start program participants.¹⁰

Furthermore, OHS provides information regarding tax-related information for Head Start programs and families. As part of an annual strategy, OHS provided programs with essential tax information, such as <u>Earned Income Tax Credits</u>, <u>Child Tax Credit</u>, <u>and Free Tax Help FAQs</u>. By offering these resources, OHS aimed to ensure that programs and families were well-informed about available tax credits and assistance programs, maximizing their financial benefits.¹¹

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Building Foundations for Economic Mobility (BFEM), https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-support-well-being/article/buildingfoundations-economic-mobility-bfem.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Earned Income Tax Credits, Child Tax Credit, Free Tax Help: FAQs (Apr. 5, 2022), https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-support-well-being/article/earnedincome-tax-credits-child-tax-credit-free-tax-help-faqs.

Student/Youth Education

In collaboration with other agencies, the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, chaired by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), maintained content on <u>Youth.gov</u> related to <u>Financial Capability and Literacy</u>. This online platform has served as a comprehensive resource hub, offering valuable information, tools, and strategies to promote positive youth development, including financial knowledge and skills among young people. Additionally, the Working Group developed and shared social media content to raise awareness about National Financial Capability Month, which takes place every April. These efforts are intended to promote financial literacy and empower youth to make informed financial decisions.¹²

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

COVID-19

In FY 2022, as the nation navigated through the different phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, HUD continued to help individuals and families maintain ownership of their homes. Overall, during the first two years of the pandemic, HUD helped almost two million homeowners remain in their homes.

In FY 2022, HUD provided more than \$24.4 million in COVID-19 Supplemental Payment (CSP) funding to owners of multifamily assisted housing. HUD's <u>COVID-19 Information</u> and <u>Resources</u> webpage is designed to help communities affected by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) address housing and health needs.

Housing

In FY 2022, the HUD Housing Counseling Program played a vital role in providing financial education and assistance to individuals and families in various housing-related matters. With approximately \$41.3 million in grants, counseling agencies were able to offer valuable guidance on homeownership, budgeting, credit management, and mortgage products.

HUD-approved Housing Counseling agencies served an impressive number of 932,118 clients during the same fiscal year. The services provided were diverse, with 38% of clients receiving group education, 47% undergoing pre-purchase housing counseling, 11% receiving mortgage delinquency counseling, 11% benefiting from rental counseling, and 10% seeking reverse mortgage counseling. The outcomes of these services were remarkable, including 438,481 households developing sustainable budgets, 286,622 clients receiving fair housing information, 150,690 individuals improving their financial capacity, 29,731 clients receiving pre-purchase counseling and purchasing homes, 16,563 households receiving rental counseling and avoiding eviction, and 24,266 households receiving rental counseling and improving their living conditions.

The Housing Counseling Agencies emphasized providing services in the client's preferred language, ensuring accessibility for diverse communities. To support this effort, HUD brochures were made available in ten different languages, facilitating effective communication, and understanding.

¹² Youth.gov., Financial Capability & Literacy, https://youth.gov/youth-topics/financial-capability-literacy.

HUD's housing counseling program primarily targeted low- to moderate-income individuals and families, with 66% of counseling clients having incomes below the area median. The HUD- certified housing counselors served a diverse population, with 37% of counseling clients identifying as African-American, 32% as White, 17% as Hispanic, and 3% as Asian. In addition to individual counseling, HUD also focused on providing financial education to residents of multifamily and public housing through the Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) Program. The FSS program granted funds to public housing authorities, enabling them to offer training, counseling, and other supportive services. These services, including financial education, aimed to expand employment opportunities and empower families receiving housing assistance to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Collaborating with the FLEC Housing Working Group, HUD organized an Alabama lender's roundtable in partnership with BankOn and The Alabama Asset Builders Coalition. Furthermore, HUD planned a national campaign to promote awareness of HUD-certified housing counseling and advance racial equity through homeownership. The campaign was scheduled to launch in 15 target cities across the country during homeownership month, emphasizing the importance of homeownership to address racial disparities.

As part of its commitment to inclusive communities and reducing the racial homeownership gap, HUD, along with the FLEC Housing Working Group, initiated three pilot projects. The St. Louis "Your Pathway to Homeownership" project aimed to increase sustainable minority homeownership in the Greater St. Louis area over five years. Strategies included raising awareness through national campaigns, forming local housing stakeholder coalitions, planning resource fairs, and collaborating with HUD's Office of Public Housing and Voucher Programs to increase participation in the Housing Choice Voucher Homeownership program.

- In Tuscaloosa, Alabama, the FLEC Housing Working Group partnered with the Community Services Programs of West Alabama (CSP), a HUD-approved housing counseling agency, to enhance financial education outcomes in rural communities. The pilot project focused on using housing counseling to amplify the impact of financial literacy and education while improving broadband internet access. CSP secured a grant from the National Digital Inclusion Alliance, allowing them to distribute 4,000 tablets with internet subscriptions to participants in collaboration with local libraries.
- In Kansas City, where the African American homeownership rate stood at 40%, the Credit & Homeownership Empowerment Services (CHES), a local HUD-approved housing counseling agency, initiated an effort to increase homeownership rates among the African American and Latino communities. HUD supported this initiative by providing resources and strategic guidance, making Kansas City part of the national campaign to raise awareness of HUD-approved housing counseling services.

Department of Interior (DOI)

Tribal and Native

In FY 2022, DOI's Bureau of Trust Funds Administration (BFTA) focused on digital equity and social sustainability and begun drafting a Beneficiary Financial Inclusion Plan (BFIP). This plan will outline the bureau's initiatives to provide expanded financial access for American Indians and Alaskan Natives.

Department of Labor (DOL)

Financial Education and Capability

DOL worked with America Saves and the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards on a webinar for America Saves Week, which focused on financial resilience in response to the pandemic. "Building Financial Resilience and Long-Term Financial Security" provided financial planning tips and tools to help individuals get their finances on track and plan for future financial security.

Retirement

Pursuant to President Biden's Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, in FY 2022 DOL focused resources on outreach and education efforts to reach underserved populations. As part of these efforts, DOL translated the Top Ten Ways to Prepare for Retirement and What You Should Know About Your Retirement Plan publications for workers into eleven new languages (Arabic, Simplified and Traditional Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Tagalog and Vietnamese). DOL also conducted 765 events with underserved communities reaching 14,869 individuals. This includes two national webcasts related to workplace retirement plans conducted completely in Spanish. One webinar helped workers understand their retirement plan. The other webinar, conducted with SBA's SCORE program, helped small business owners understand how they could save for their own retirement and help their employees save as well using one of the many available options.

DOL responded to 98,894 inquiries related to workplace retirement plans and saving for retirement with questions about the law or their plan, and recovered \$385.4 million in pension benefits for 28,196 individuals. DOL conducted 1,916 outreach events related to retirement benefits reaching 28,406 individuals and distributed approximately 123,000 printed publications on workplace retirement plans and saving for retirement (also available on the DOL website) for populations ranging from college seniors about to enter the workforce through all stages of an individual's career and employers with a retirement plan and small business owners without a retirement plan.

DOL conducted several webinars with partners to provide comprehensive information to help workers save for retirement. One webinar, Steps to Improve Women's Retirement Security with WISER, provided information to help address the challenges faced by women in saving for retirement. Countdown to Retirement: Are You Ready? was conducted with the SSA, HHS

(Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services) and CFPB to help workers nearing retirement address the many issues involved in planning for retirement. Planning Your Financial Future, which DOL conducted with the Department of Education and the FTC, focused on helping college seniors get a good financial start as they begin their careers.

For small business owners with a retirement plan, DOL hosted two Getting It Right – Know Your Fiduciary Responsibilities webinars with over 850 attendees. These webinars assist employers, especially small business owners, in complying with the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA).

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

Financial Education and Capability

Starting in April 2021, and continuing through FY 2022 and beyond, the VA began hosting financial literacy classes, including classes during the National Financial Capability Month of April as well as "Wellness Wednesday Financial Education" classes on the third Wednesday of every month. As of December 14, 2022, the VA completed 49 Wellness Wednesday seminars, reaching 14,317 registrants. Attendees rated overall satisfaction and content of the classes at 98.2%.

Additionally, the VA partnered with Prudential Insurance Company of America, Inc. to provide a comprehensive website that contains various financial literacy articles, white papers, calculators, and debt management tools. The website (<u>prudential.com/Veteran</u>) is provided at no cost to Veterans.

Also, the VA has partnered with the Association of Military Banks of America (AMBA) to implement the Veterans Benefits Banking Program (VBBP). This program focuses on providing banking options, financial education, financial counseling and credit counseling for Veterans and beneficiaries through financial institutions and organizations that address the unique challenges facing the Veteran community. The cornerstone of the program is the VBBP website, which provides information on banks and credit unions offering low-cost or no-cost accounts for electronic funds transfer (EFT). By the end of 2022, over 200,000 Veterans, who had previously been receiving payments via paper check or prepaid debit card, converted to a safer and more reliable direct deposit option for their compensation, pension, and education benefits.

Housing

The VA developed the following materials and programs to advance housing literacy and education:

- <u>Home Loan Buyer's Guide</u> assists Veterans in understanding the homebuying process and how to make the most of the VA home loan benefit.
- <u>Guidance on Natural Disasters</u> provides information to Veteran borrowers and the mortgage industry on steps to take following a natural disaster and resources for assistance.
- <u>Help to Avoid Foreclosure</u> outlines actionable steps and resources available to Veteran borrowers who are having trouble making mortgage payments.

 Partial Claim Program (VAPCP) is a home retention program created to assist Veteran borrowers specifically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic to resume making their regular mortgage payments after exiting forbearance. VAPCP was available from July 27, 2021 through October 28, 2022.

COVID-19

The VA updated existing policy to assist Veteran borrowers navigate COVID-related financial hardship, including an expansion of loss-mitigation options for servicers to assist Veterans in retaining their homes throughout the pandemic.

- Coronavirus Frequently Asked Questions: What Veterans Need To Know | Veterans Affairs is a comprehensive resource intended to promote Veteran home loan benefit access during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- <u>CARES ACT Forbearance Fact Sheet for Mortgagees and Servicers</u> of FHA, VA, or USDA Loans is a joint-agency resource for servicers with loans insured or guaranteed by the FHA, VA, or the Rural Housing Service (RHS).
- COVID-19 Home Retention Waterfall and COVID-19 Refund Modification assisted Veterans who required a significant reduction in their monthly mortgage payments because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This temporary program, which included Loan Deferment as a COVID-19 Home Retention Option, was available from July 27, 2021 through June 30, 2023.

Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC)

Financial Capability and Education

Financial education is central to the FDIC's efforts to expand economic inclusion and promote confidence in the banking system. For more than 21 years, the FDIC Money Smart financial education program has offered non-copyrighted, high quality, and free resources for financial institutions, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders to meet the financial education needs of consumers and small businesses. Resources are designed to help provide practical guidance on how to make informed financial decisions, develop a positive banking relationship, and protect against financial scams. Materials are available in multiple languages, Braille, and large print. In FY 2022, FDIC Money Smart resources reached over one million online page views and 100,000 curricula downloads.

In FY 2022, FDIC continued to update and promote *How Money Smart Are You?*, a suite of 14 games and related resources about everyday financial topics. For example, in April 2022, for National Financial Capability Month, the FDIC released a Spanish version of *How Money Smart Are You?* - ¿Qué tan money smart es usted?. Once at the website, the user can click on "Vea esta página en español" at the top of the page to see the Spanish version. The English and Spanish versions can be easily accessed on a mobile device or computer, so that consumers can use the learning tool wherever and whenever they want to learn about protecting and managing their money. Updates

also included making it easier for organizations such as banks, schools, universities, non-profits, and community-based organizations to engage with the individuals or players who are linked to their *How Money Smart Are You?* organization accounts. Organizations can now track individuals' progress and issue certificates of completion. Finally, the online *How Money Smart Are You?* Help Center was updated with over 50 commonly asked questions and answers.

Since launching *How Money Smart Are You?* in September 2021, the FDIC has issued more than 110,000 certificates of completion and has more than 32,000 player accounts, approximately 680 organization accounts, and more than 1 million page views. Organizations and individuals interested in learning more about *How Money Smart Are You?* should contact the Money Smart financial education team at CommunityAffairs@fdic.gov or visit playmoneysmart.fdic.gov.

The FDIC Money Smart Alliance Program recognizes organizations that contribute to the delivery of Money Smart to consumers and small businesses. Over 1,000 organizations belong to the Alliance. The FDIC also holds online events for the Alliance and members of the public who are interested in Money Smart. In FY 2022, FDIC held seven national Train-the-Trainer and Money Smart Alliance events online reaching more than 800 trainers or potential trainers. The FDIC also hosted more than two dozen one-on-one meetings with organizations (e.g., libraries, educators, HUD-certified financial counselors, community-based organizations, and veterans) looking to understand how to use Money Smart. Finally, through the monthly Money Smart News publication, the FDIC highlights tips, updates, and success stories for how financial educators can use Money Smart.

FDIC Consumer News is the monthly newsletter received by more than 100,000 consumers and communities which provides practical guidance on how to become a smarter, safer user of financial services, including helpful hints, quick tips, links to useful resources, and commonsense strategies to protect and stretch consumers' hard-earned dollars. The FDIC released 12 new issues of Consumer News in FY 2022. Topics included tips on combining or sharing finances with another person, economic inclusion, misrepresentation of deposit insurance coverage for digital assets, and considering finances during military relocations.

The <u>FDIC Consumer Resource Center</u> helps people access depositor and consumer protection information and resources provided through the FDIC. This includes access to the <u>National Center for Consumer and Depositor Assistance</u>, which is responsible for helping consumers of FDIC-supervised institutions and responding to consumer inquiries about deposit insurance, consumer laws and regulations.

Underserved Populations

<u>#GetBanked</u> is a national FDIC initiative that continues to reach thousands of consumers each month highlighting the benefits of opening a bank account and providing consumers with information needed to find a bank and open an account online. With a quality banking relationship, consumers can build savings and qualify for credit to meet their goals, such as owning a home or starting a business.

FDIC's <u>Advisory Committee on Economic Inclusion (ComE-IN)</u> provides the agency with advice and recommendations on important initiatives to support expanding consumer and community access and sustainable engagement with the nation's banking system. This includes reviewing basic retail financial services (e.g., low-cost, safe, and sustainable transaction accounts; access to credit; and savings accounts), as well as demand-side factors such as consumers' perceptions of financial institutions.

FDIC's <u>Community Affairs</u> program promotes economic inclusion and community development through events and collaborations with stakeholders committed to low- and moderate-income individuals and communities. Among other things, this work includes promoting the use of Money Smart financial education tools to expand economic inclusion and financial well-being. A sample of these events is described below.

- January 19, 2022. Expanding Access to Safe and Affordable Credit in Minnesota. This webinar highlighted specific barriers to credit in Minnesota BIPOC communities, and education tools and community-based programs that can address them. The event featured findings from the 2019 How America Banks Survey, including access to bank/nonbank credit by selected demographics. A panel presented varying approaches used by nonprofit credit counseling organizations to help households maintain access to the mainstream credit they already have, and address clients' challenge managing multiple types of debt resulting from the pandemic. A key theme that emerged from the CDFI panel was that the majority of presenter's clients were single moms looking for a better life for their families.
- April 26, 2022. Building Credit and Promoting Economic Inclusion in South Dakota Native American Communities. This event addressed specific barriers to accessing credit in South Dakota Native American communities. Discussed topics included: Credit education tools for nonprofits, credit trends for South Dakota households, organizations offering nonprofit credit counseling, and the availability of credit building loans.

Student/Youth Education

In FY 2022, the FDIC worked with its <u>Youth Banking Network</u> to develop a *Guide to Organizing Reality Fairs* to help banks and other intermediaries offer youth and young adults a real-world simulation of an adult's financial life. During a three-hour reality fair, youth made real world financial decisions about managing money, including engaging with a financial institution; budgeting for, renting or buying a home; managing health care expenses; buying insurance; understanding transportation costs; obtaining a loan; managing debt; and more. These immersive learning experiences are often held in partnership with youth-serving organizations and schools. Research suggests experiential learning can be effective at improving financial capability. The guide is available at <u>fdic.gov/moneysmart</u>.

In FY 2022, the FDIC updated its <u>Money Smart for Young Adults</u> curriculum. The resource seeks to help young adults make better financial choices early in life, contributing to a long-lasting, positive impact on their financial futures. The curriculum's target age range changed from 12-20 to 16-24 and includes: more in-depth coverage of select financial topics, curriculum efficacy

features from CFPB's youth financial education curriculum review tool, updates to pre- and post-knowledge assessments, a revised visual format, and more immersive learning exercises. The refreshed curriculum received positive feedback during pilot testing with the target audience of young adults. The curriculum is available at fdic.gov/moneysmart.

Older Americans

In June 2022, the FDIC and the CFPB hosted a national webinar in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day to increase awareness of ways to counter financial exploitation of Older Adults through the use of Money Smart for Older Adults.

Consumer Protection and Fraud Prevention

In 2022, FDIC released a fact sheet addressing common misconceptions on whether FDIC deposit insurance covers funds provided by customers to crypto companies. The document is called - <u>Fact</u> <u>Sheet: What the Public Needs to Know About FDIC Deposit Insurance and Crypto Companies.</u>

Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA)

COVID-19

In 2021, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac (Enterprises), adjusted their coordinated temporary COVID-19 servicing flexibilities. Updates included allowing certain eligible borrowers to receive COVID-19 forbearance and payment deferral terms of up to 18 months. As of year-end 2022, approximately 79,000 borrowers remained in active COVID-19 forbearance. The Enterprises completed over one million COVID-19 payment deferrals during the pandemic.

FHFA and the Enterprises are examining lessons learned from the pandemic that might inform the standard loss mitigation framework and improve the ability of mortgage servicers to assist struggling homeowners. A key component of the FY 2022 workstream was FHFA's efforts together with Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and CFPB to support borrower access to Treasury's Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF). These funds helped borrowers affected by COVID-19 maintain homeownership by increasing awareness of the temporary suspension of foreclosure activities associated with that program.

FHFA ensured Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac kept their <u>multifamily property look-up tools</u> updated. These tools provide renters with information on the property they live in and indicate whether it has an Enterprise-backed mortgage. Both Enterprises continue to offer COVID-19 related forbearance. If a multifamily property owner requests forbearance, they must also adopt a suite of tenant protections, including a prohibition on eviction for non-payment of rent for the duration of the forbearance term. Similarly, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac maintain their respective single-family loan lookup tools, which allow borrowers to quickly determine if their mortgage is owned by either <u>Fannie Mae</u> or <u>Freddie Mac</u>.

Housing

In FY 2022, as part of Fannie Mae's Equitable Housing Finance Plan for 2022-2024, Fannie Mae launched <u>HomeView</u>, its first-time homeownership education curriculum, in both English and

Spanish. Fannie Mae, through associated marketing and outreach efforts, anticipated that 50,000 households would complete the course in 2022. <u>HomeView</u> is intended to increase knowledge of the homebuying and mortgage qualification process. It also provides reliable, trusted information to reduce misperceptions that can discourage underserved borrowers from pursuing homeownership.

FHFA updated its website to ensure that current and helpful information about loss mitigation offerings from Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac are available to the public. The <u>Mortgage</u>

<u>Assistance</u> webpage provides information about specific programs that were designed to assist homeowners and renters affected by COVID-19. In addition, the webpage prominently features links directing consumers to informational webpages on mortgage assistance, including newly developed content from Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and CFPB.

The <u>Loss Mitigation</u> webpage describes the options for loss mitigation that are available to help struggling borrowers sustain homeownership and avoid foreclosure. The Enterprises utilize a variety of solutions through their loss mitigation waterfall to provide options to avoid foreclosure. A short description is provided for key loss mitigation offerings including repayment plans, forbearance plans, payment deferrals, loan modifications, short sales, and deeds-in-lieu.

FHFA continues to work with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to ensure that their borrower-facing websites, <u>KnowYourOptions.com</u> and <u>MyHome</u>, are updated with current and helpful information to enable borrowers to access details about loss mitigation solutions including COVID-19-specific offerings.

In FY 2022, FHFA collaborated with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to add the updated Supplemental Consumer Information Form (SCIF) (Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac Uniform Residential Loan Application Form 1103) to the Mortgage Translations website. The SCIF helps industry professionals collect borrower information through standardized questions on homeownership education, housing counseling, and language preferences. The SCIF is available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Tagalog. Servicing-related resources including the Mortgage Assistance Application, Borrower Solicitation Letter, Forbearance Servicer Script, and a Servicer Script for Homeowners with a Resolved COVID-19 Hardship were revised and added to the website in all six languages listed above.

Freddie Mac continued to support credit-building through positive on-time rent payment reporting in FY 2022. Freddie Mac enrolled an estimated 150,000 renter households in this program, helping those without credit scores to obtain credit scores and helping others to improve their credit scores. In September 2022, Fannie Mae launched its Multifamily Positive Rent Payment Reporting Pilot. Consistent with Freddie Mac's initiative, Fannie Mae intends to use the pilot to help renter households build credit through positive rental payment reporting to the three major credit bureaus.

Student/Youth Education

In FY 2022, FHFA established the FHFA Student Financial Literacy Program. This program educates and mentors high school students, with backgrounds that have been historically underrepresented in the financial services industry, on financial literacy topics. Over the course of an academic year, student participants learn about multiple topics, including budgeting, developing a credit history and its use, purchasing and renting a home, and banking services. The program also informs students about careers in the financial services industry and teaches them presentation skills.

Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

Financial Education and Capability

During FY 2022, the FTC launched a new campaign, <u>Money Matters: How to Spot, Avoid, and Report Scams</u>. The campaign focuses on eight topics related to the lingering financial effects of the pandemic. With articles, videos, social media graphics, and PowerPoint presentations, Money Matters helps people learn – and teach others – how to tackle common money issues.

Consumer Protection and Fraud Prevention

To help people understand the basics of crypto-assets and spot related scams, the FTC provides updated information on its website: ftc.gov/cryptocurrency. During FY 2022: the FTC published a data spotlight highlighting how scammers trick people into crypto-related fraud; and worked with federal and state partners, including the FLEC, to disseminate the FTC's cryptocurrency consumer alerts and resources.

During 2022, the FTC updated its campaign for older adults: ftc.gov/PassItOn. The campaign respects its audience's lifetime of experience and encourages them to share what they know with friends and family. Pass It On offers fact sheets, presentations, activities, and bookmarks, all to help get the conversation started. This update expands to 13 topics, including information on business impersonators and investment scams. The FTC has distributed more than 18 million pieces of Pass It On material nationwide since 2014.

Military and Veteran

For more than a decade, the FTC's <u>MilitaryConsumer.gov</u> has given financial readiness advice to help servicemembers and their families spot and avoid scams and rip-offs. Throughout FY 2022, the FTC presented regular webinars for these audiences, and used target days on its blog to focus attention on servicemembers and scams: Military Appreciation Month (May), Military Consumer Month (July), and Veterans and Military Family Month (November). The MilitaryConsumer.gov blog reaches over 42,000 military consumers.

General Services Administration (GSA)

Financial Education and Capability

<u>USA.gov</u> and its Spanish-language counterpart, <u>USA.gov/espanol</u>, serve as valuable resources for individuals seeking information on various topics, including financial capability. In FY 2022,

<u>USA.gov</u> recorded a significant number of webpage visits, totaling 6,831,824. Additionally, there were 25,748 phone calls and chats received by <u>USA.gov</u>, indicating a strong demand for assistance and guidance related to financial matters.

Recognizing the importance of reaching a diverse audience, <u>USA.gov/espanol</u> played a crucial role in providing information in Spanish. The website received a total of 1,239,047 webpage visits, highlighting the significance of offering resources in multiple languages. Furthermore, <u>USA.gov/espanol</u> received 3,049 phone calls and chats, demonstrating the need for Spanishlanguage support and assistance regarding financial capability.

National Credit Union Administration (NCUA)

Financial Education and Capability

MyCreditUnion.gov, NCUA's consumer financial protection website, had 1,354,229 page views in FY 2022. This free consumer website provides timely and practical financial tips, interactive learning tools, fraud prevention information, and financial resources relevant to various life events like starting a first job, opening a savings or checking account, and obtaining a loan. New content was added to the website in FY 2022, covering topics such as crypto assets; understanding open enrollment season and employee benefits; the cost of higher education; preventing elder financial abuse; home ownership, and more.

<u>Espanol.MyCreditUnion.gov</u>, like its English language counterpart, offers Spanish-speaking consumers tools and resources that help consumers build knowledge and make well-informed financial decisions. The site had 108,820 page views in FY 2022.

NCUA created a series of short videos for consumers that addressed financial topics, trends, and frequent money management misconceptions. These videos are available on NCUA's <u>YouTube channel</u> and <u>MyCreditUnion.gov</u> and credit unions can embed these videos into their outreach materials and link them to their websites.

Consumer Protection and Fraud Prevention

On October 13, 2022, the NCUA's offices of Credit Union Resources and Expansion, Examination and Insurance, and Business Innovation sponsored a panel discussion on Ransomware in the Financial Sector. It explained how ransomware occurs and the ways to spot it. This discussion also provided education and mitigation recommendations to the mainly credit union and examiner audience.

On May 19, 2022, NCUA hosted a webinar, <u>How Credit Unions Can Protect Older Americans</u>

<u>Against Exploitation</u>, with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Office of Older

Americans to give credit unions a deeper understanding of elder financial exploitation, common tactics used to exploit older Americans, and the ways that credit unions can prevent, spot and report elder financial abuse, including by completing a Suspicious Activity Report. The Suspicious Activity Report is required to be submitted by all financial institutions operating in the United States following the discovery of: insider abuse involving any amount, violations

aggregating \$5,000 or more where a suspect can be identified, violations aggregating \$25,000 or more regardless of a potential suspect, or transactions aggregating \$5,000 or more that involve potential money laundering or violations of the Bank Secrecy Act.

On March 23, 2022, the NCUA hosted a <u>webinar on overdraft protection programs</u>, which highlighted the importance of overdraft protection to credit unions and their members, and how the market landscape is changing. With experts from Credit Union Collaborate and the Filene Research Institute participating, the discussion covered: types of overdraft protection programs, how credit unions and banks compare, fee structures, and market changes, including the impact of fintech.

On October 6, 2022, NCUA hosted a virtual roundtable <u>How Credit Unions Empower Hispanic Consumers and Communities</u>. The roundtable brought together leaders within the credit union industry for a moderated discussion on advancing safe, fair, and affordable financial access and empowering Hispanic consumers, particularly the unbanked or underserved.

COVID-19

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the NCUA took proactive measures to address the needs of credit unions and consumers. Recognizing the challenges faced by the financial sector during this unprecedented time, the NCUA made significant updates and developed new resources on their website to provide guidance and support.

Through NCUA.gov/Coronavirus Pages, the NCUA ensured that their website reflected the most up-to-date information and resources related to COVID-19. The NCUA updated multiple pages to address the evolving needs of credit unions and consumers, offering guidance on topics such as loan modifications, member access to services, and regulatory changes. These updates were intended to help credit unions navigate the challenges brought about by the pandemic and to provide consumers with valuable information regarding their financial options and rights.

Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC)

Financial Education and Capability

In FY 2022, the OCC continued to publish its <u>Financial Literacy Update</u>, which compiles financial literacy events, initiatives, and resources offered by the OCC and other government agencies and organizations. The publication moved to a quarterly format beginning in calendar year 2022. The Update was distributed to over 51,000 individuals and received more than <u>1,100</u> website visits. The <u>Financial Literacy Resource Directory</u> on OCC.gov received more than 5,100 website visits in FY 2022.

OCC's <u>HelpWithMyBank.gov</u>, which provides information and assistance for customers of national banks and federal savings associations, received more than 112,100 site visits. The website also includes frequently asked questions, an online customer complaint form, and other helpful information.

Underserved Populations

In FY 2022, OCC's <u>Project REACh</u> (Roundtable for Economic Access and Change) continued to bring together leaders from the banking industry, national civil rights organizations, business, and technology firms to reduce barriers that prevent full, equal, and fair participation in the nation's economy. Nationally, Project REACh continued its work in four key areas: (i) affordable homeownership; (ii) inclusion for credit invisibles; (iii) revitalization of minority depository institutions; and (iv) access to credit and capital for small and minority-owned businesses. Local Project REACh initiatives were also launched in Dallas, Detroit, Milwaukee, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles. Financial literacy is a core component of several subcommittees working under the Project REACh umbrella.

In FY 2022, OCC leadership and staff participated in several events related to financial literacy, capability, and financial health, including:

On December 8, 2021, Acting Comptroller of the Currency Michael J. Hsu <u>discussed reforming</u> <u>bank overdraft programs to improve individuals' financial health</u> in remarks before the Consumer Federation of America's 34th Annual Financial Services Conference.

On March 23, 2022, Acting Comptroller of the Currency Michael J. Hsu hosted Her Majesty Queen Máxima of the Netherlands, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development (UNSGSA) to discuss financial inclusion and financial health.

The OCC's Community Affairs Officers (CAOs) participated regularly in initiatives designed to increase access to financial services, with financial literacy as a core component of these initiatives. A sample of these events is described below.

- On October 27, 2021, an interagency webinar "Getting Banked: Developing Bank Accounts Tailored for Unbanked Missourians" provided information and resources to assist bankers and other participants with their clients' deposit needs.
- April 26, 2022, an interagency webinar "Building Credit and Promoting Economic Inclusion in South Dakota's Native American Communities" raised awareness of credit education, credit counseling, and credit building programs.
- On June 29, 2022, a "Maintaining Property Through Intergenerational Wealth" webinar addressed the issue of heirs' property, tangled titles, and the impediments these issues can cause in the ability of families to inherit properties and thus maintain or build wealth.

Community Resilience

In April 2022, the OCC released a *Community Developments Investments* newsletter on <u>Partners in Recovery: Community Reinvestment and Resilience</u>. This issue discussed how banks can collaborate with community development financial institutions (CFDIs) and other community-based organizations to help rebuild communities hit hard by natural disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Financial Health and Crypto-Assets

On April 28, 2022, Acting Comptroller of the Currency Michael J. Hsu launched the Financial Health: Vital Signs discussion series to explore issues relating to the financial wellbeing of consumers. The first event featured as discussion about minority ownership of cryptocurrency with John Hope Bryant, the founder, CEO and Chairman of Operation Hope, and Professor Tonya Evans of Penn State Dickinson Law.

On May 20, 2022, the OCC served as co-host with the financial education non-profit organization Operation Hope at the *Cryptocurrency* + *Digital Assets Summit*. This event convened a range of panelists who exchanged views on crypto-assets and explored ways to educate consumers and investors, especially in historically underserved communities.

Student/Youth Education

FY 2022 marked the fourth year of the OCC's summer High School Scholars Internship Program (HSSIP). The OCC continued its partnership with the District of Columbia's Department of Employment Services, through the Mayor Marion S. Barry Summer Youth Employment Program, to recruit rising seniors for internships to increase students' awareness of the OCC and federal government agency operations, financial regulation, and the banking industry. In FY 2022, the OCC hosted 45 new and returning high school students and 10 college students. The OCC also worked with other federal agencies hosting student interns to deliver weekly financial education and professional development enrichment activities on topics including "Savings Rules and Habits" and "How to Navigate and Finance Your College Career."

Tribal and Native Community Awareness

On April 26, 2022, a webinar developed by the OCC and other agencies, "<u>Building Credit</u> and <u>Promoting Economic Inclusion in South Dakota's Native American Communities</u>," raised awareness of credit education, credit counseling, and credit building programs.

Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

Financial Education and Capability

OPM Training Events provided the federal human resources (HR) community with tools to properly counsel and serve federal employees. The training program covers an array of benefits related topics, but also has components that increase financial literacy. Streamed videos can be accessed through OPM's official YouTube Channel.

Retirement

OPM provides Federal Benefits Training Events annually, covering topics on the basics of Retirement Programs, Thrift Savings Plan, Social Security Benefits, Flexible Spending Accounts, Federal Employees Group Life Insurance, and Long-Term Care Insurance. The event was held virtually on August 16 through September 8, 2022.

Developed by OPM, <u>Agency Financial Literacy Plans</u> requires all federal agencies to develop a retirement financial education plan. The purpose of the plans is to develop programs to

communicate information to employees so they can plan for retirement and make informed decisions. Retirement Financial Literacy and Education Strategy is available on the OPM website. Retirement Savings Calculators are available on the OPM website.

Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)

Investor Protection and Fraud Prevention

SEC's Office of Investor and Education Advocacy (OIEA) continued to educate retail investors through a range of investor outreach. OIEA responds to complaints and inquiries from investors, issues Investor Alerts and Bulletins on investing and current scams, distributes educational materials, and conducts investor education presentations. Investor education events and presentations focused on servicemembers and veterans, older Americans, underserved and minority communities, women, students, and young adults. OIEA also promoted its public service campaign to help older investors better understand investing and the ways to avoid being defrauded.

SEC hosts <u>Investor.gov</u>, which includes resources to inform investment decisions and avoid fraud: 21.2 million sessions. Eighty-nine percent of respondents surveyed indicated that they learned something that might impact their behavior. <u>Investor.gov</u> also includes materials and resources translated into Spanish; certain resources are translated into Chinese, Portuguese, Vietnamese, and Creole.

Small Business Administration (SBA)

Financial Education and Capability

The SBA's Office of Entrepreneurial Development oversees a national network of business counselors that include capital readiness and financial literacy in various settings that serve approximately 3 million clients each year. The SBA's successful partnership with the FDIC continues with the expanded reach of the Money Smart for Small Business curriculum and training community. In addition to Small Business Development Centers, Women's Business Centers, and SCORE Chapters, the Money Smart curriculum is actively shared with the SBA's unique Community Navigators service network (300 organizations), Native American host organizations, and Rural Affairs outreach initiatives. In-person workshops and counseling sessions are enhanced by the SBA's award-winning digital training courses that feature financial literacy tips and resources.

In 2022, the SBA featured additional financial literacy and training modules on the agency's <u>Learning Platform</u>. The SBA's online learning programs are designed to empower and educate small business owners on entrepreneurial best practices and available financing options.

Also in FY 2022, the SBA introduced the Money Smart for Small Business curriculum to over 6,000 organizations as part of its Community Navigators Pilot Program. This pilot program represents a diverse group of economic development, business recovery, and faith-based institutions that will expand the Money Smart Alliance.

Climate Risk

In FY 2022, the SBA's Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience continued to host intergovernmental and public-private training sessions to provide education information and resources for communities addressing climate risk.

Consumer Protection and Fraud Prevention

In FY 2022, the SBA continued to promote consumer protection and fraud protection through cybersecurity awareness and mitigation activities. Access to these activities was promoted through digital resources and outreach campaigns. The SBA partnerships on fraud protection include Federal agencies and grantee organizations located in all regions and many hub cities in the United States.

Military and Veteran

In FY 2022, the SBA's Veteran Business Outreach Centers continued to service military communities across the country via the SBA/FDIC Money Smart for Small Business training series.

Social Security Administration (SSA)

Financial Education and Capability

In their commitment to supporting individuals in their financial journey, SSA implemented various initiatives and engaged in collaborative efforts during FY 2022. In March 2022, SSA introduced an <u>online protective filing tool</u> specifically designed for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) applicants. This tool allows individuals – or a third party on their behalf – to express intent to apply for benefits and request an appointment to complete the application process. By leveraging digital technology, SSA aimed to streamline the application procedure and make it more user-friendly for individuals seeking SSI benefits.

In April 2022, SSA partnered with America Saves to host a Twitter chat as part of the commemoration of Financial Literacy Month. This discussion centered around imparting valuable tips and insights for individuals to plan for a secure financial future. By utilizing the interactive nature of social media, SSA and America Saves aimed to reach a wider audience and empower individuals with financial knowledge and tools.

Throughout FY 2022, SSA published 24 informative blog posts regarding financial literacy on their <u>Social Security Matters</u> webpage. These blog posts covered a range of topics, including the Child Tax Credit (CTC), retirement savings, Financial Literacy Month, and the role of SSA's online services in helping individuals plan for a financially stable future. By sharing relevant and practical information, SSA aimed to enhance individuals' understanding of financial matters and provide them with the resources to make informed decisions.

SSA also utilized social media platforms to disseminate financial literacy content. In FY 2022, they created 28 social media posts focused specifically on financial literacy topics. With approximately 447,000 followers on <u>Facebook</u> and a reach of around 1,094,000 individuals and

organizations on <u>Twitter</u>, SSA aimed to connect with a broad audience and promote financial awareness and empowerment.

Consumer Protection and Fraud Prevention

In March 2022, SSA observed <u>National "Slam the Scam" Day</u>. This outreach campaign is a part of <u>National Consumer Protection Week</u> and is intended to raise public awareness of government imposter scams. SSA released messages and informational resources to the public via multiple channels about how to avoid financial scams.

Retirement

In February 2022, SSA participated in America Saves Week (ASW), the annual call-to action for the public to commit to saving successfully. Along with thousands of participating organizations and agencies, SSA encouraged the public to review their finances, set savings goals, and create a financial plan. To assist with the theme, "Saving for Retirement", SSA provided materials on planning for retirement, released a Dear Colleague Letter, updated their social media accounts with targeted messaging, and published a guest blog on their <u>Social Security Matters</u> blog.

Student/Youth Education

In FY 2022, SSA worked on a Supplemental Security Income (SSI) mailer project to encourage current Social Security beneficiaries receiving less than the maximum monthly Federal SSI payment to apply for SSI. Additionally, SSA collaborated on a direct mail campaign with the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (PA DHS) where they identified and notified low-income households with children who may be eligible for SSI.

Inter-Agency Efforts

In FY 2022, FLEC members worked together to achieve a common goal of providing appropriate financial literacy and education programs and information to the public. In addition to the regular interagency FLEC meetings and FLEC interagency working groups, there were multiple bilateral or interagency partnerships between FLEC members to advances specific projects, including selected examples below.

SBA/FDIC

The SBA continued its inter-agency partnership with the FDIC to co-produce and promote the Money Smart for Small Business training curriculum. This free resource is featured throughout SBA's business mentor network, including use by Community Navigators, Small Business Development Centers, SCORE chapters, Women's Business Centers, Veteran Business Opportunity Centers, and Office of Native American Affairs grantee centers.

CFPB/FDIC

The CFPB continued its inter-agency partnership with the FDIC to co-produce and promote the Money Smart for Older Adults training curriculum, which raises awareness among older adults and their caregivers on how to prevent fraud, scams, and other elder financial exploitation. In addition, FDIC and CFPB also partner to co-share and collaborate on resources designed to help

caregivers and educators teach young people about money. This includes the jointly developed Teacher Online Resource Center, Money Smart for Young People, and Money as You Grow.

NCUA/FEMA

On September 15, 2022, NCUA partnered with FEMA to host a <u>webinar</u> focused on how credit unions and their members can prepare for, and remain resilient in the face of, climate-related disasters. Specifically, the webinar explored the challenges faced by credit unions serving communities impacted by natural disasters, highlighted the ways credit unions support equity and financial inclusion in the context of disaster preparedness and financial resilience, and amplified best practices and resources for credit unions and their members. Speakers included representatives from FEMA, Hope Credit Union, and NCUA's Office of the Chief Economist.

Assessment of the National Strategy

Through the framework of the National Strategy on Financial Literacy, the FLEC seeks to improve Americans' financial literacy and education and promote the benefits of financial literacy and education. The National Strategy was last updated in 2020. The 2020 National Strategy builds upon previous National Strategy iterations. It highlights evidence-based practices on topics relevant to financial literacy and education, especially as they relate to reaching traditionally underserved populations, and identifies a leadership and guidance role for the federal government in the financial education field.¹³ Through policy development, research and coordination, and focused program and resource development, the FLEC seeks to support, inform, and improve the broader financial education field in its work to equip Americans with the skills, knowledge, and tools to make decisions that enhance their financial well-being.

The activities of the FLEC in FY 2022 continued to advance key 2020 National Strategy priorities. These activities included the FLEC represented agencies engaging in robust discussions on the new and emerging topics in financial literacy and education and implementing program activities in specific domains, including housing, student and youth education, retirement, military and veterans, consumer protections, and crypto-asset education to advance financial literacy and education.

Activities for Next Year (FY 2023)

In FY 2023, the FLEC will continue to coordinate the federal government's efforts in promoting financial literacy, education, and inclusion. This work is consistent with the 2020 National Strategy. These activities include expanding outreach and awareness on existing materials and increasing awareness among targeted populations through MyMoney.gov; integrating financial education where appropriate; and sharing lessons learned.

In FY 2023, the FLEC will create a targeted webpage on MyMoney.gov to promote members' activities in April, which is Financial Capability Month. The FLEC will also promote the

¹³ U.S. Financial Literacy and Education Commission, U.S. National Strategy for Financial Literacy 2020, https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/US-National-Strategy-Financial-Literacy-2020.pdf.

importance of financial literacy and education for Tribal and Native communities, including highlighting the topic in a public meeting and creating a resource webpage on MyMoney.gov. The FLEC will continue to provide crypto-asset-related information to FLEC members through the Digital Assets Working Group's regularly scheduled meetings. And finally, Treasury's Office of Consumer Policy will publish a report on the impacts of climate hazards on American household finances, with input from FLEC members agencies.

Summary Data on MyMoney.gov

Summary of FLEC Public Meeting and Hearings

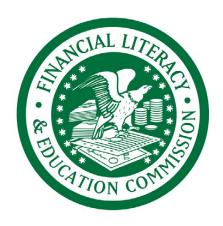
The FLEC Public Meeting minutes, webcasts, and other information can be found on the <u>FLEC</u> webpage.

The FLEC did not convene any hearings in FY 2022.

Use of www.MyMoney.gov and Toll-Free Phone Number

In FY 2022, <u>MyMoney.gov</u> received a total of 1,150,970 page views from 462,721 users. Apart from the landing page, the link to My Money Five was the most visited page. In FY 2022, <u>MyMoney.gov</u> provided information about FLEC Public meetings and the National Financial Literacy Strategy, and introduced a new resource webpage on <u>Crypto-Assets</u>.

The General Services Administration (GSA) provides a toll-free phone number to the public for general inquiries. In FY 2022, the GSA received 25,748 financial education and capability-related phone calls and 3,049 financial education and capability-related phone calls in the Spanish-language.



U.S. Financial Literacy and Education Commission

www.MyMoney.gov