



# Building Pathways to **Financial Well-being**

2021 Annual Report



**Community**  
FINANCIAL RESOURCES

# Letter from the E.D.

At Community Financial Resources, we're committed to helping folks navigate their paths to financial wellness through all the curves life can throw.

For CFR, much of the first half of 2021 was spent continuing to respond to the immediate needs of our community through direct cash assistance. To date, we've



**distributed over \$2 million in emergency relief funds to more than 4,800 families**, regardless of their documentation status. We continue to disburse funds to families most in need, illustrating the devastating impact and the long road ahead to recovery ahead from the pandemic.

Recognizing the dire need for safe banking options for our undocumented community, **we began offering a basic banking and savings product** through our credit union partner and invested in a payment infrastructure to help support our partners' payment facilitation programs.

We also launched the newest iteration of our MoneyGoals app; **ensured 5,372 people received their tax returns, stimulus funds and the monthly children's tax credit payments;** and expanded our guaranteed income work.

These are all examples of the pathways to financial well-being that we're providing. I'm so proud to share with you in the following pages the ways in which CFR utilized our financial toolkit to advance people on their pathway to financial well-being.

In community,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Parisa Esmaili'.

Parisa Esmaili  
Executive Director

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Community Financial Resources (CFR) is a national economic justice organization that provides a pathway to financial well-being through products, tools and education that improve financial stability, protect assets, and establish a foundation to build wealth for low-income, low-wealth households, with a focus on communities of color.

Through our national network of partnerships with over 100+ nonprofits and employers, CFR connects low-income and financially vulnerable households with consumer-friendly banking products and financial planning tools that help them build financial management skills, protect assets, and establish wealth.



# CFR's Financial Toolkit

We offer solutions that disrupt cycles of poverty and racial-wealth inequality, and relieve financial related stress. Our Financial Toolkit scaffolds individuals by providing a pathway to stability and mobility, regardless of where they are starting on their journey.

Participants in our programs show improved credit scores, increased savings, enhanced financial management skills, reduced financial stress, and a heightened sense of autonomy and control over their financial lives.

## Partner Spotlight Building Blocks for Kids (BBK)

BBK amplifies the voices of parents/caregivers of color and partners with them to advance equitable access and opportunities for all youth to have quality education and all families to achieve emotional and physical well-being.

In the fall of 2021, CFR and BBK facilitated financial education workshops to BBK's three Sanctuary groups: the Latina Sanctuary, Men's Sanctuary, and the Black Women's Sanctuary. BBK is currently implementing additional workshops within the larger BBK community – the workshops leaders are BBK participants who are trained by CFR staff. BBK has also taken advantage of CFR's financial products and tools and participants have been enrolled in the Focus Card and Credit Union accounts to ensure they have access to safe, fair and affordable banking.

### 01 Basic Banking

Enables people to store money in a safe, convenient place, get cash when they need it, and save for their future.

### 02 Credit Building Program

Combines personal savings with a suite of products that include a secured credit card and a credit builder certificate of deposit (CD).



### 03 MoneyGoals Mobile App

Users create personalized financial action plans; the app provides active financial coaching through texting, daily tips, and automated nudges that motivate action.

### 04 Behavior-Based Financial Education

Includes a range of money management topics like budgeting and credit building, and guides participants in turning their learnings into actions by using real-world financial products.



## By the Numbers

**\$35.8m**

Deposited  
on the Focus  
Card

**3,919**

New Focus  
Cards

**\$487k**

Saved on  
the Focus  
Card

**2,153**

New Rewards  
Cards

**\$2m+**

COVID Relief  
to 4,800+  
families

**\$594k**

Rewards  
Distributed

**\$15.2m**

in tax returns,  
stimulus funds,  
and CTC payments  
to 5,372 Focus Card  
cardholders





# The Power of Cash

For some people, the first step on their Pathway to Financial Well-Being is having more cash.

**Cash gives people the means to solve their own problems.** Years of research – and CFR’s own data – proves that when people are given unrestricted cash, they spend it on vital necessities. It also enables them to find steady and full-time employment, creating economic stability for themselves and their families. **Not only is having cash an important factor to financial well-being, but having a safe, affordable and reliable banking product to store and use funds is equally as important.** And that’s where CFR comes in.

**As the lead product provider in the country’s first two county- and city-driven guaranteed income initiatives,** CFR learned that while the idea of guaranteed income has quickly gained traction, practical tools for implementation are harder to come by.

CFR partners with guaranteed income programs nationwide to provide our Basic Banking products, which act as a secure account for people to receive their guaranteed income payments. **In 2021, we on-boarded eight new GI partners from across the country** focused on a variety of populations, from first-time moms to home healthcare workers to undocumented communities.

**To date, 595 people have received over \$3.7 million of guaranteed income through our basic banking products.**

The need for direct cash is also why we’ve continued our COVID-19 cash assistance program, distributing emergency funds through our community partners. **Since launching, we have deposited more than \$2 million in cash assistance to over 4,800 families through our basic banking products.**



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Partnering with Community Financial Resources allowed us to meaningfully provide both a guaranteed income to and bank 100 new mothers in Northern Manhattan, including a typically excluded population of undocumented mothers. A priority for us was remaining as inclusive as possible with the design and launch of our program, and CFR allowed us to do that, supporting all of our mothers regardless of immigration status, and in a way that was proximate and understanding of the nuances in serving a vulnerable population. The CFR team went above and beyond in ensuring that not only the program launch went smoothly, but also in ensuring that all of our mothers had their questions answered and felt well-equipped to take advantage of all the new financial tools at their disposal.

MEGHA AGARWAL  
The Bridge Project



# MoneyGoals

Our MoneyGoals app is a powerful tool that gives users control over their own financial journey by helping them develop customized Financial Action Plans and facilitating financial coaching communications.

After a year of iteration, we launched a feature-rich update, making the platform easier and more fun to use.

## Top Financial Action Plan Tasks Completed

- Reviewing credit report
- Opening a checking account
- Creating a budget
- Completing a spending tracker





# Credit Building as an Asset

*Mayra is a full-time student, mother, and wife who works part-time. When she first met her financial coach, her coach had her identify three goals she wanted to accomplish. Mayra chose to: 1) increase her credit score, 2) save money to buy a car, and 3) in the long-term, to purchase a home. After tracking her spending for a month, Mayra was shocked to see how much money she spent on unnecessary items. Based on those results, Mayra's coach helped her create a budget that incorporated credit-building structures and savings to achieve her goal of purchasing a car.*

*After a long journey, Mayra was able to save enough money to buy a used 2007 Toyota Prius paid in full in cash. In addition, Mayra's credit score improved by 50 points.*



CFR supports people on their Pathway to Financial Well-Being by offering a credit building program that encompasses credit education and an assessment tool that recommends safe credit products, such as our certificate of deposit installment loan or a secured credit card.

On average, individuals who go through CFR's credit building program, and who had no credit prior to starting the program, establish an average credit score of 678, while individuals who start the program with a credit rating increase their credit score by an average of 92 points.

Mayra's inspiring story shows how she used CFR's credit-building program to build her credit, purchase a car, and get on the pathway to home ownership.

In 2021, two credit-builder CD participants completed their final payments to their CD's. They increased their credit scores by an average of 41 points.



# Partners

AAA Fair Credit Foundation  
Accounting Aid Society  
Advance Memphis  
Alameda County Social Services Agency  
Alameda Point Collaborative  
Allen Temple Baptist Church  
Atlanta Mission  
Balance  
Berkshire Community Action Council  
Branches  
Branded Collective  
Bridge Project  
Building Blocks for Kids  
CASH Oregon  
CA\$H Prosperity Campaign  
Campaign for Working Families  
Capital Area United Way  
Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO)  
Chrysalis  
Code for America  
Cole Hardware  
College of San Mateo  
Community Action Duluth  
Community Action of Skagit County  
Community Action Partnership of Kern  
County of Santa Clara  
Courageous Women Association  
Dioceses of Houma–Thibodaux Catholic Charities  
East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC)  
Familias Unidas  
Omaha EITC Coalition  
Family Justice Center  
Firebrand Artisan Bread  
First Place for Youth  
Fremont Family Resource Center  
Goodwill Industries of Tulsa  
Goodwill of San Francisco, San Mateo and Marin  
Goodwill of Silicon Valley  
Grace Solutions  
Greater Richmond Interfaith Program (GRIP)  
Green River Asset Building Coalition (GRABC)  
Harvest Hands Community Development Corporation  
Hess Advantage

Jefferson Economic Development Institute (JEDI)  
Jewish Family Service of San Diego  
Just Harvest  
LA Conservation Corps  
Liberty's Kitchen  
Mile High United Way  
Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA)  
Mr. Sparkle  
National Council of Jewish Women: Los Angeles  
Nehemiah Gateway Community Development Corporation  
Neighborhood Improvement Association (NIA)  
Neighborhood Industries  
New Earth  
New Horizons Independent Living Center  
New Moms  
Nez Perce Tribe  
North Hills Community Outreach  
Northwest Indian Community Development Center (NWICDC)  
Open Research  
Opportunity Junction  
Pacifica Resource Center  
Peninsula Family Service (PFS)  
Pio Decimo Center  
Pocono Mountains United Way  
Prepare + Prosper  
Preservation of Affordable Housing (POAH)  
Prosperity Now  
REDF  
Research Foundation City University of New York (CUNY)  
Revolution Foods  
Root and Rebound  
Roots Community Health Center  
RYSE Center  
Sacred Heart Community Service  
Samaritan House  
San Antonio Community Development Corporation  
San Francisco Unified School District  
Santa Cruz Community Ventures  
SparkPoint Contra Costa  
Springboard for the Arts  
Squaxin Island Tribe  
Tehama County Community Action Agency

Tri-County Action Program (Tri-CAP)  
United Community Action Partnership  
United Way Bay Area  
United Way Greenville County  
United Way of Northern California  
United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania  
United Way of Tarrant County  
United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona  
United Way of West Florida  
University of Connecticut  
UpSpire  
West Contra Costa Public Education Fund (Ed Fund West)  
YMCA of San Francisco  
Young Women's Freedom Center

# 2021 Funders

Comerica Bank  
California Department of Financial Protection & Innovation  
JPMorgan Chase  
Goldman Sachs  
S.H. Cowell Foundation  
United Way Bay Area  
US Bank  
Wells Fargo

# Board Members

David Derryck, President; Chief Innovation Officer, SaverLife  
Kendall Baker, Treasurer; Chief Financial Officer, Little Passports  
Pat Krakov, Treasurer; Principal & Partner, Lighthouse Philanthropy Advisors  
Parisa Esmaili; Community Financial Resources  
Lauren Leimbach; Community Financial Resources (retired)



# About CFR

*Providing pathways to financial well-being through products, tools and education.*

Since our founding by financial industry veterans and economic justice activists in 2003, Community Financial Resources has been a leader in applying the principles of behavioral economics in designing consumer-friendly financial products and tools that usage produces beneficial money management outcomes for consumers.

To date, CFR programs have helped over 100,000 people nationwide open up one or more new banking accounts (checking, savings, prepaid card, secured credit-builder card) or use CFR-sponsored financial tools.



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*CFR operates in beloved community and kinship. We have seen this firsthand with partners and residents. CFR's experience and expertise in developing and operationalizing credit and wealth building, for residents, families, and entire communities; their commitment to transformational partnership over transactional support; and their care and attention to relationships are just a few reasons why they are important to this initiative.*

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#### THE RYSE CENTER

*Richmond Rapid Response Fund  
(R3F) Coalition Partner*



CFR connects community to high-quality financial solutions by:

1. Researching, sourcing or developing, and promoting low-cost consumer-friendly financial products, tools, and services.
2. Building the capacity of our partners to deliver our customized programming and tools to their constituents.
3. Establishing best practice standards for consumer-friendly financial services.