

NEW DIRECTIONS



Annual REPORT

**WEST CENTRAL
MISSOURI
COMMUNITY
ACTION AGENCY**

*Assisting & Advancing Rural Families & Communities
since 1965*

West Central Missouri Community Action Agency

West Central Missouri Community Action Agency has served our nine-county region since 1965. We've changed with the times but remain dedicated to our prime directive, "Helping People, Changing Lives."

Our Agency Mission

West Central **helps people and communities reach their fullest potential** by cultivating and coordinating **resources**, building **partnerships**, and **advocating for change**.

Our Vision

West Central envisions a region where **people and communities are thriving**.

Our Values

Equity, Education, Encouragement, Empowerment, and Excellence support our work to implement our mission and fulfill our vision.

The Promise of Community Action

Community Action
changes peoples lives,
embodies the spirit of hope,
improves communities,
and **makes America**
a better place to live.

We **care** about the entire community
and we are **dedicated** to **helping people**
help themselves
and **each other.**



West Central's Leadership



Administrative Leadership, Left to Right: Aaron Franklin, Chief Financial Officer; Jamie Oberly, Chief Community Services Officer; Amy Anderson, Chief Housing Assistance Officer; Jana Witt, Chief Development & Compliance Officer; Chris Richardson-McQueen, Chief Housing Enrichment Officer; Sheridan Garman-Neeman, Chief Community Wealth Building Officer; Kelly Ast, Chief Regional Mobility Officer; Julie Engeman, Chief Administrative Officer; Mary Lou Schussler, President; Chris Thompson, Chief Executive Officer.

Officers & Executive Committee

Fred R. Bunch, Board Chair
Don Boultinghouse, Board Vice-Chair
Martha Sander, Board Treasurer
Leroy Strobe, Board Secretary
Alvin Griffin, Executive Committee
Shirley Parker Morse, Exec. Committee
Sonny Rogers, Executive Committee

Low Income Representatives:

Brenda Darr, Bates County
Thomas Gage, Benton County
Warren "Sonny" Rogers, Cass County
Dan Yoder, Cedar County
Gene Hartley, St. Clair County
Martha Sander, Vernon County



2024 Board of Directors, Left to Right: Dan Yoder, Larry Berry, Shirley Parker Morse, Alvin Griffin, Fred Bunch, Don Boultinghouse, Brenda Darr, Thomas Gage, Laura Smith, Dale Lawler, Gene Hartley, Leroy Strobe, Joe Wilson. Not pictured: Sonny Rogers, Martha Sander, Monty Kisner, Holly Stark, Sunday Unger.

County Elected Officials

Larry Berry, Benton County
Monty Kisner, Cass County
Don Boultinghouse, Cedar County
Dale Lawler, Henry County
Leroy Strobe, St. Clair County
Joe Wilson, Vernon County

Private Industry Representatives

Alvin Griffin, Bates County
Holly Stark, Cass County
Fred Bunch, Henry County
Shirley Parker, Hickory County
Sunday Unger, Morgan County
Laura Smith, St. Clair County

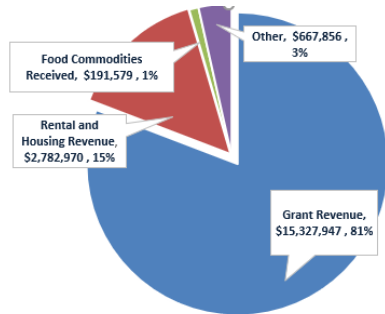


Fiscal Year 2024

West Central received funding from 62 sources to operate 56 different services or programs in FY 2024.

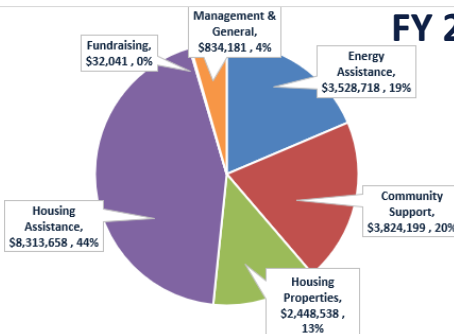
Funding sources include direct federal funding, federal funding passed through state entities, and funding from state agencies, corporations, and private foundations.

FY 2024 Total Revenue



Grant Revenue	FY 2024
Department of Health and Human Services	\$ 3,063,500
Department of Housing and Urban Development	\$ 8,208,243
Department of Energy	\$ 854,131
Department of Agriculture	\$ 1,172,020
Department of Labor	\$ 63,376
Department of Homeland Security	\$ 51,616
Small Business Administration	\$ 240,562
Regional Mobility	\$ 1,440,509
Other Grant Revenue	\$ 233,891
Total Grant Revenue	\$ 15,327,947

FY 2024 Total Expenditures



INDIVIDUALS SERVED:
27,254



Pathways to Excellence

West Central Missouri Community Action Agency is proud to be one of only six Community Action Agencies nationwide to achieve the prestigious Gold Tier designation through the Pathways to Excellence (PTE) Program. This recognition, guided by NCAP's Standards of Excellence and modeled after the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, highlights our commitment to excellence, innovation, and impactful service.



The rigorous Gold Tier process included:

- Completion of Bronze & Silver Tier requirements
- Specialized training and technical assistance
- A comprehensive self-study of 35 Standards of Excellence
- Peer review feedback for continuous improvement

This designation showcases West Central's legacy of excellence and teamwork while the organization strives for the Platinum Tier, the highest level of achievement!



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Workforce YOU



Workforce YOU is a collaborative initiative designed to address workforce barriers impacting individuals and businesses. Challenges like childcare, transportation, education, and housing create obstacles that make it harder for people to work and for employers to find and retain talent.

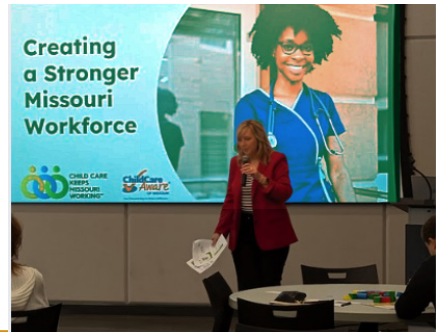
Workers Face Challenges. Employers Do Too.



Workforce YOU fosters partnerships that drive real solutions by bringing together a diverse network of stakeholders, including businesses, government agencies, nonprofits, healthcare providers, educational institutions, and community leaders. This

united effort strengthens the workforce, supports employers, and creates lasting positive change for communities.

Together, Workforce YOU partners are building a stronger, more resilient workforce—one that benefits everyone.



Housing Enrichment:

Multi-Family Housing Locations

BENTON COUNTY:

Oaktree Villa Senior Housing
919 Walnut Drive #C-2
Warsaw, Missouri 65355
660-438-5007

CASS COUNTY:

Greenleaf Estates Senior Housing
16805 Spring Valley Road
Belton, Missouri 64012
(816) 331-4620

Hawthorn Estates Senior Housing
1900 Jenkins Drive
Harrisonville, Missouri 64701
(816) 380-6833

Walnut Estates Senior Housing
412 West Walnut
Raymore, Missouri 64083
(816) 331-2959

CEDAR COUNTY

Maplewood Estates Senior Housing
1119 South Maplewood Place
Stockton, Missouri 65785
(417) 276-3330

Cedar Ridge (Disabled Housing)
1201 East Patricia
El Dorado Springs, Missouri 64744
(417) 876-6114

HENRY COUNTY:

Antioch Hills
1819 North Gaines Drive
Clinton, Missouri 64735
(660) 885-8200

Greyhound Apartments
507 West Colt
Windsor, Missouri 65360
660-987-1919

HICKORY COUNTY:

Hickory Estates Senior Housing
701 West Highway 54
Hermitage, Missouri 65668
(417) 745-0131

JACKSON COUNTY:

Prairie Estates Senior Housing
1515 Jones Avenue
Grandview, Missouri 64030
(816) 767-1445

Willow Estates Senior Housing
4800 South Hocker
Kansas City, Missouri 64136
(816) 350-3134

ST. CLAIR COUNTY

Appleton Estates Senior Housing
300 South Beech
Appleton City, Missouri 64724
(660) 476-2185 ext. 1306



Housing Enrichment:

Multi-Family Housing Communities

West Central owns and manages 12 affordable, service-enriched multi-family housing communities designed to provide more than just a place to live—they are homes with a heart. These communities offer residents of all ages a supportive environment where they can thrive.

Applicants may qualify for subsidized rent, calculated as 30% of their income minus deductions for medical, senior, child, and utility expenses. Waiting lists for these properties range from one month to two years.

To enhance the living experience, West Central established the Service-Enriched Housing Program which develops and coordinates resident services at its affordable housing properties across Missouri.

Fiscal Year 2023-2024

Households obtaining safe, affordable housing - 433

Individuals who obtained Health Care - 74

Immunizations - 51

Wellness Classes & Activities - 162

Prepared Meals - 170

Food Pantry Distributions - 119

Transportation - 7

Contact us about finding your new home!

Email: forrent@wcmcaa.org

Call 660-476-2185, ext. 1504

Text: 660-466-2134



Housing Enrichment: *Weatherization & HeRO*

The Home Enrichment section of Housing Enrichment manages the **Weatherization** and **Home Energy Repair Opportunity** programs to help renters and homeowners ensure their home is healthy and safe for their family. Home energy audits, weatherization assistance, and home repair are free services to qualified individuals. Assessments and repairs are conducted by an experienced team of construction specialists who treat each home as though it were their own. **According to a national evaluation of the program, weatherization improvements and upgrades help these households save an average of \$283 or more every year on utility bills.**

Fiscal Year 2023-24

Average Air Infiltration reduction -- 37.12%

Individuals with improved access to physical space -- 160

Number homes weatherized -- 75

Homes receiving HeRO services -- 9

Total Weatherization and HeRO Improvements:



- Windows: 24
- Storm Windows: 50
- Doors: 30
- Roof: 4
- ADA Modifications: 4
- Water Heaters: 2
- HVAC (heat and/or air conditioning): 60
- Water Heaters: 27



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Housing Enrichment: Weatherization & HeRO

Grateful for West Central: How Weatherization & LIHEAP Improved Client's Home and Life

All of my contacts with West Central have been positive. In 2024, I received home improvements through the weatherization program, the HeRO program and benefits from LIHEAP. Under the first one a new HVAC was installed and insulation was placed under the house. Through the HeRO program, a new roof was placed and a ramp/rail was installed. For a number of years, I have reaped benefits from LIHEAP.

***I strongly
recommend all of
these programs to
others who qualify.***

*My sincere thanks
to each and every
one of you.*

*M. J., Vernon
County, Missouri*



Contact the Weatherization/HeRO team!

Call 660-476-2185, extension 1506

Email: energyconservation@wcmcaa.org

Text: 660-466-2134

Include your full name, address, and program name



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NEW GROWTH
WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER



Housing Assistance

West Central Housing Assistance programs provide essential services to help families secure and maintain safe, affordable housing.

Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program – Offers rental assistance to help low-income families, seniors, and individuals with disabilities afford decent and sanitary housing in the private market.

Home Ownership Voucher (HOV) Program – Allows eligible families receiving HCV assistance to apply their voucher toward purchasing a home, together with ongoing support for homeownership expenses.

Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program – A HUD initiative designed to help HUD-assisted families increase their earned income, build financial stability, and reduce reliance on public assistance.

Transition Services – Rapidly connects individuals and families experiencing homelessness to temporary housing solutions through time-limited financial assistance and targeted support

Fiscal Year 2023-2024

Housing Choice Voucher Program

Housing assistance payments - \$6,733,249

Housing Choice Voucher Participants - 960

Home Ownership Assistance - \$29,718

Family Self-Sufficiency Program:

Participants- 76

Graduates - 9

Total escrow disbursed - \$52,233

Achieved Home Ownership - 1 achieved home ownership

Transition Services:

Homelessness Prevention Assistance Provided: \$5,515

Rapid re-housing assistance - 2 received direct services, \$1,094

Prevention Assistance - 8 received direct services, \$6,537



Housing Assistance:

Home Ownership Program Success

Steve and Michelle joined the Housing Choice Voucher Program in 2011 and lived in the same Cass County apartment for over 10 years. In 2022, they enrolled in the Family Self-Sufficiency Program, focusing on job retention and savings, which more than doubled their income. By early 2023, Steve and Michelle worked with their bank to improve their debt-to-income ratio and credit scores, completing HUD-approved pre-purchase counseling. Mid-2023, they received pre-approval for a home loan and, despite initial fears, found and purchased a home by December 2023. Now, after a year in their new home, Steve and Michelle are grateful and happy homeowners.



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WOMEN'S BUSINESS CENTER



LIHEAP:

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

LIHEAP Fiscal Year 2023-2024

The LIHEAP program helps low income people meet their immediate energy needs. LIHEAP can help in two ways:

The Energy Assistance (EA) Program provides a one-time payment for one fuel type for heating or cooling.

The Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP) helps pay for fuel bills when in crisis.



Number of Households Assisted:

6,430



Number of Individuals Avoiding Utility Shut-Off:

1,237



Number of Individuals Whose Energy Service was Restored After Disconnection:

130



ECIP Utility Payments:

4,640



Total Energy Assistance Benefits Paid: \$1,521,585

Total ECIP Benefits Paid: \$1,583,358



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LIHEAP:- *Making a Difference*

Support When You Need It Most

When families struggle with utility shut-offs or heating costs, LIHEAP provides critical relief. But beyond the numbers, the real impact is seen in the voices of those helped.

In Their Own Words

"The gas man pulled up this morning, and I was so relieved. You are such a blessing!" – St. Clair County Resident

"I truly appreciate the effort your team put into my application. Your help means so much during these tough times." – Marsha

"Keeping my home warm for my kids was a huge worry. LIHEAP lifted that burden. Thank you!"

Real Help, Real Impact

Immediate relief: 1,237 families avoided utility shut-offs.

Peace of mind: 6,430 parents kept their homes warm.

Compassionate assistance: Every call and application mattered.

Community strength: No family faces energy insecurity alone.

We're Here for You

We understand waiting for assistance can be stressful. Our team is working hard to process applications and respond as quickly as possible. **If you're waiting to hear back, please know your request matters and we are working to assist you as soon as possible.**

Get Help Today

LIHEAP is more than financial assistance—it's about stability and support. If you or someone you know needs help, visit wcmcaa.org to learn more.

Contact our LIHEAP specialists!

Call and leave a message: 660-476-2185, Energy Assistance Option

Text: 660-466-2134 Email: energyhelp@wcmcaa.org



Community Services

West Central's Family and Community Engagement Strategies (FACES) program assists and advances individuals, families and communities with program services and resource connections. Services are provided region-wide and include a wide range of comprehensive services.

Fiscal Year 2023-24

Family Engagement served 1,512 unduplicated people in 704 households last year. Examples of the services provided include:

- Workforce Enrollments - 64
- Career Coaching – 42
- Tuition Support – 10
- Financial Coaching - 23
- Family Mentoring Sessions - 137
- Case Management - 672
- Food Pantry Distribution - 2,961 Food Boxes

Community Projects in FY24:

- Foster Care Simulation
- Workforce YOU

Community Engagement:

- Step Up To Leadership
- County-specific Baby Showers
- County-specific Resource Sharing Events



Community Services: *Nourishing Communities*

Access to fresh, nutritious food remains a priority for West Central Missouri Community Action Agency and this year's food distribution efforts made a significant impact. **In FY 2024 the Farm Share Program provided 114 residents across five housing complexes with monthly donations of a dozen eggs and fresh vegetables, such as tomatoes,**



squash, lettuce, kale, cucumbers, and onions. With the help of a dedicated volunteer, staff carefully sorted, packaged, and delivered these farm-fresh items, ensuring that local families had access to healthy, locally sourced food.

The agency's food pantry partnerships also played a vital role in addressing food insecurity. **The St. Clair County Food Pantry**, supported by Ozark Food Harvest and generous donors,



distributed 677 food boxes to an average of 56 families and 88 individuals each month. The Raymore Food Pantry, backed by Harvesters Community Food Network and additional donors, provided an astounding **2,961 food boxes, reaching an average of 190 families and 483 individuals monthly.** These efforts would not have been possible without the dedication

of volunteers, who donated 213.75 hours in St. Clair County and 1,851.50 hours in Raymore. Their work helped distribute over **166,000 pounds of food across both locations**, reinforcing our shared commitment to ensuring no family goes hungry.



Food Systems

The New Growth Food Systems program champions local and regional initiatives that support farm-to-fork practices.

Farm to Fork Food Summit and Expo

The Farm to Fork Summit and Expo is an annual event for food and farm businesses in west central Missouri and eastern Kansas. It helps participants gain insights and forge connections, sparking collaborative ventures and fresh business prospects. This contributes to a thriving community with access to quality food for a healthy lifestyle.

Participation in 2024 included **126 registered attendees, 24 vendors**, a luncheon with locally sourced foods, 2 keynote speakers, and 8 breakout sessions. This united effort strengthens the workforce, supports employers, and creates lasting positive change for communities.

Farm to School

The 2024 Farm to School program connected **13 schools** across **9 counties** with food grown on local farms. This initiative provided **14,716 students** with fresh, locally sourced food, enhancing their nutrition and fostering a deeper understanding of agriculture. By integrating farm-fresh produce into school meals, the program supports local farmers and promotes healthy

Beginning Farmers & Ranchers

The 2024 Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program connected **72 farmer mentors** with **42 beginning farmers** and administered \$2,400 in training scholarships. This program helps farm entrepreneurs with less than 10 years of experience succeed quickly. Participants gain access to mentorships, business guidance, and vital resources, benefiting both individual farmers and rural economies.



Heartland Regional Food Business Center

The Heartland Regional Food Business Center (HRFBC) aims to build a more resilient, responsive, and competitive food system by providing localized and proactive assistance to small, mid-sized, and diverse food and farm businesses, as well as local and regional food sector initiatives. Established in 2023 and initially funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, it is one of 12 Regional Food Business Centers.



The organization is guided by two co-directors: Katie Nixon, Food Systems Director at New Growth, a rural Missouri community development corporation (kmnixon@newgrowthmo.org), and Mary Emery, Director of the

Rural Prosperity Nebraska initiative at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (memery2@unl.edu).

HRFBC assisted **47 new farm clients**, held **143 technical assistance meetings**, and facilitated **20 farm-to-market resource connections in 2024**. Additionally, a \$3M Business Builder grant fund was awarded to HRFBC, with distribution planned for 2025.



New Growth Transit

New Growth Transit, an affiliate of West Central Missouri Community Action Agency, supports rides to residents throughout a 14-county service area through a volunteer driver network. Counties served include Bates, Benton, Camden, Cass, Cedar, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Miller, Morgan, Laclede, Polk, St. Clair, and Vernon.

Rides are scheduled at least 48 hours in advance for essential trips within a 200-mile radius, including medical appointments, therapy, pharmacy, work, groceries, and banking.

Volunteer drivers receive the federal mileage reimbursement, which doesn't affect taxable income. They are trained, insured through CIMA Volunteer Insurance once certified, and set their own schedules and destinations. Many say the role offers more than reimbursement—it provides connection and fulfillment.

Tameka, a volunteer driver in Dallas County, shared her story: "After battling cancer, I wanted to do something meaningful. Choosing my schedule sealed the deal. Helping others lifts my spirits too." Tameka drives several days a week for her fellow residents in Dallas County. "I've been homeless and lived without a car before. I know what it is like to be stranded."

Read stories from Tameka, other drivers, and riders at: newgrowthmo.org/category/transportation

For more information, call 417-283-7991, or email transportation@wcmcaa.org



New Growth Transit

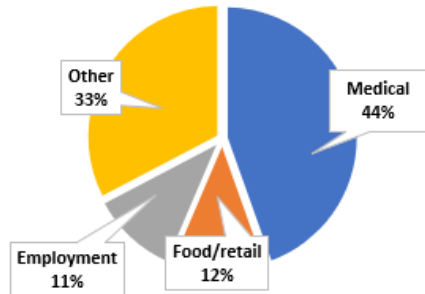
Doing More in '24!

Fiscal Year 2023-24

NGT Outcomes

- Miles Provided:
646,287
- Round Trips: **6,949**
- Clients Transported:
2,600
- Volunteer Drivers: **72**
- Volunteer Hours:
14,133

New Growth Transit FY 24 Ride Destinations



Helping Other Organizations Provide Service:

- Care Connection - 6 counties
- Cedar County Seniors
- Horizon Foundation in Vernon and Henry Counties

Helping Other Community Action Agencies create a Volunteer Transportation Program:

- Jefferson-Franklin Community Action Corp. (EZMO)
- Economic Security in Southwest Missouri (CARS)
- Missouri Ozarks Community Action Inc. (MOCA)



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New Growth Women's Business Center

The New Growth Women's Business Center is West Central's business development arm. Administered by New Growth, the New Growth Women's Business Center provides training and technical assistance for rural entrepreneurs across 15 counties (13 counties in Missouri and 2 counties in Kansas). Established in 2021, the NG WBC is one of only five Small Business Administration-designated women's business centers in the nation to primarily serve rural communities.

Fiscal Year 2023-2024

Number of unique clients served - 408

New business starts - 8

Jobs supported - 752

Capital Infusions - \$237,951

Credit as an Asset Workshops - 42

Webinars - 5



WBC Staff: Wacey Rivale, Sydney Lee, Tiffany Frost, Kim Carter



This program is funded (in part) through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. Programs are extended to the public on a non-discriminatory basis. Reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities will be made if requested.



New Growth Women's Business Center

Flying High with a WBC Microloan

Levi discovered his passion for drones in a mapping class at State Technical College of Missouri, inspiring him to turn his interest into a business. After graduating, he launched Midwest Plains Drone, specializing in agricultural pesticide spraying, but his USDA loan required a 25% match—more than his savings allowed. With a \$10,000 microloan from New Growth, Levi bridged the gap and purchased the necessary equipment. “I took my last final at 8 a.m., and by the afternoon, my drone was in the air working,” he said, skipping graduation to focus on his new venture.



Based in Amsterdam, Missouri, a town of just 500 people, Midwest Plains Drone thrived in its first season. With drones offering safer alternatives to traditional crop dusting, Levi sees major growth potential in the evolving industry. By mid-October, he had upgraded equipment, secured customers for next year, and built a sustainable

business. He credits New Growth's microlending program for making it possible, proving how small-scale support can have a big impact. ***To inquire about Levi's drone services, call 660-464-2401 or find Midwest Plains Drone on Facebook.***



This program is funded (in part) through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. Programs are extended to the public on a non-discriminatory basis. Reasonable accomodation for persons with disabilibites will be made if requested.



New Growth Capital

New Growth Capital

New Growth Capital is New Growth's financing arm. New Growth Capital provides rural entrepreneurs with microenterprise loans from \$500 - \$50,000. New Growth Capital also helps individuals and entrepreneurs join the financial mainstream with credit building services.

Credit building is a free, nonprofit service available from New Growth Capital to help individuals and entrepreneurs establish or improve credit scores. A good credit score is necessary to access employment, housing, and bank financing, and for going into business and saves money through lower borrowing costs, insurance rates, and more. Credit building can move more rural people and small businesses into the financial mainstream.

Microlending

SBA Microenterprise Financing - Funded by the Small Business Administration, microlending monies can be used in any of New Growth Capital's 15 counties. It cannot fund real estate, but can fund real estate improvements.

RMAP - The Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program can be used within the 15-county service area plus Cass County. It can fund real estate purchases but not real estate improvements.
Funded by USDA.

RLF - The Revolving Loan Fund is a small flexible fund that can be used to finance businesses in any rural county in Missouri.

TOTAL LOANS FY 2024: \$50,151



This program is funded (in part) through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. Programs are extended to the public on a non-discriminatory basis. Reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities will be made if requested.



Empowering Communities through Credit Education

Credit as an Asset: A Foundation for Financial Stability

"Credit as an Asset", a specialized curriculum designed to empower consumers with essential credit-building knowledge, offers an accessible approach to understanding credit. It helps individuals and small business



owners grasp credit fundamentals, dispel misconceptions, and develop effective credit management strategies. Participants learn to set credit-building goals, interpret credit reports and scores, manage debt and collections, and access financial tools for long-term stability. A strong credit history opens doors to affordable financial services, crucial for achieving personal and professional milestones.

Expanding Access to Credit Education

Recognizing the growing need for financial literacy, CBA Master Trainer staff have launched Train-the-Trainer initiatives to equip educators and organizations with the knowledge and tools to support their communities with credit education. Training programs—including in-person, hybrid, and online options—will reach a broader audience so consumers, small businesses, and youth can access high-quality financial education for a stronger financial future.

Credit Building Workshops

Workshops are available to educate individuals and businesses on responsible credit use. Sessions provide actionable insights and tools to help participants take control of their financial future. To host or participate in a Credit Building workshop, please reach out via email at wbcinfo@newgrowthmo.org.



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