



November 14, 2017

**Contact:**  
Greenville County Human Relations  
864-467-7095

## **Greenville County Selected to Develop Financial Counseling as Free Public Service for Low-Income Residents**

***Greenville County Chosen to Receive Support from Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund and Bloomberg Philanthropies to Replicate Proven FEC Public Municipal Financial Counseling Model***

Greenville, SC – Greenville County Human Relations, Greenville County and the national [Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund](#) (CFE Fund) announced today their selection to replicate the proven Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) model under the new *FEC Public* national platform.

“We are excited and grateful to be awarded this grant by the CFE Fund,” says Dr. Yvonne Duckett, Executive Director, Greenville County Human Relations. “Given the financial challenges many of our residents face, it is crucially important to provide the tools and resources to promote wealth building in the Greenville Community.”

Greenville County will receive technical assistance and a seed grant to bring free, high-quality, one-on-one financial counseling to residents. The CFE Fund’s *FEC Public* program is supported by a \$7,750,000 investment from Bloomberg Philanthropies as part of their American Cities initiative.

“Greenville County is growing and managing our personal finances is becoming more complicated,” says Chairman Butch Kirven, Greenville County Council. “This grant will enable the talented professionals with Greenville County’s Human Relations Office to help more citizens learn how to better manage their personal finances.”

“Financial Empowerment Centers are exactly the kind of bold idea that should spread between cities. It is a proven model that helps low-income citizens and we are delighted to be doubling-down on our investment in this initiative,” said James Anderson, head of Government Innovation at Bloomberg Philanthropies.

“Local leaders know first-hand the connection between family financial stability and community financial stability,” said **Jonathan Mintz, President and CEO of the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund**. “Dr. Yvonne Duckett and Greenville County Human Relations are joining a national movement to bring free, high-quality financial counseling as a public service to their residents; we are proud to partner with Greenville County and Bloomberg Philanthropies on this critical work.”



The national *FEC Public* platform promotes scale and sustainability for the growing movement of professional, one-on-one financial counseling as a free public service. The CFE Fund is seeding additional FEC replication multiple avenues of grant support, intensive technical assistance, and a vibrant national learning community, which will help as many as 50 local government partners plan, launch, and sustain free financial counseling for their residents. First piloted in New York City under Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg in 2008, the FECs have worked with almost 80,000 clients, helping them reduce individual debt by almost \$99 million, and increasing their families' savings by close to \$9 million. In addition, a recent CFE Fund evaluation showed that this program works even for residents with very low incomes and other complex financial challenges. [City Name] is one of twelve localities selected to receive a grant and intensive technical assistance to prepare to launch a local FEC program.

Financial Empowerment Centers (FECs) offer professional, one-on-one financial counseling as a free public service. At the Financial Empowerment Centers, professionally trained FEC counselors help individuals and families with low and moderate incomes manage their finances, pay down debt, increase savings, establish and build credit, and access safe and affordable mainstream banking products. At the core of the FEC model is the integration of counseling into other social services, including housing and foreclosure prevention, workforce development, prisoner reentry, benefits access, domestic violence services, and more.

### ***FEC Evaluation Findings***

Earlier this year, the CFE Fund released [\*An Evaluation of Financial Empowerment Centers: Building People's Financial Stability As a Public Service\*](#), a three-year evaluation of the initiative's initial replication in 5 cities (Denver, CO; Lansing, MI; Nashville, TN; Philadelphia, PA and San Antonio, TX). The evaluation shows that the model worked in a variety of city contexts, and that clients succeeded in reducing debt, increasing their savings, establishing and improving credit, and opening safe banking accounts, despite deep financial challenges.

The evaluation draws on data from 22,000 clients who participated in 57,000 counseling sessions across the first 5 city replication partners over 30 months. As further evidence of the program's success, evaluation findings include:

- **FEC clients succeeded.** Overall, these FEC clients reduced their debt by \$22.5 million, increased their savings by \$2.7 million, and nearly a quarter of unscored clients working on credit issues succeeded in establishing a credit score.
- **FEC clients succeeded despite deep financial challenges.** FEC clients averaged annual incomes of only about \$21,000; they were twice as likely as all U.S. consumers to have a subprime credit score and half as likely to even have a credit score; nearly 23% had no health insurance; and over 60% had no savings.
- **FEC clients meaningfully reduced debt.** While FEC clients began counseling with an average of nearly \$29,000 in debt —more than half with credit card accounts, 40% with utility debt, and 38% with student loans—over a third of clients who tried to reduce their debt succeeded, with total debt reduction at \$22.5 million.
- **FEC clients meaningfully built savings.** FEC clients were much more likely than average US residents to have no savings, yet overall, almost a third of clients working to increase their savings succeeded, averaging \$1,634 and totaling \$2.7 million among just those included in the evaluation.



- **Banking status matters.** Unbanked FEC clients had a notably more difficult time achieving financial outcomes, underscoring the importance of a bank account. Compared to clients with accounts, they were less than half as likely to increase their savings, and over a third less likely to establish a new credit score, even working directly and repeatedly with a counselor in efforts to do so.
- **The FEC model worked in a variety of city contexts.** The evaluation documents replication success across 5 different American cities. Critical, well-replicated features of the model included programmatic emphasis on public-private partnerships, building rapport and prioritizing the clients' goals, encouraging return sessions, and professionalism through data-driven management and professional training.

### **About the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund (CFE Fund)**

The CFE Fund supports municipal efforts to improve the financial stability of households by leveraging opportunities unique to local government. By translating cutting edge experience with large scale programs, research, and policy in cities of all sizes, the CFE Fund assists mayors and other local leaders to identify, develop, fund, implement, and research pilots and programs that help families build assets and make the most of their financial resources. The CFE Fund works in partnership with Bloomberg Philanthropies and other generous sponsors to support our work. For more information, please visit [www.cfefund.org](http://www.cfefund.org) or follow us on Twitter at @CFEFund.

### **About Greenville County Human Relations**

The mission of Greenville County Human Relations is to improve the quality of life in Greenville County by promoting positive community relations and equal opportunity. The six Commissioners that govern Human Relations are appointed by Greenville County Council. Human Relations staff includes a diverse group of talented professionals cross-trained in multiple areas in order to best serve. Human Relations provides citizens essential financial services including support in foreclosure prevention, homebuyer education, and housing counseling

<http://www.greenvillecounty.org/HumanRelations/>

###