##  Customer Goal and Financial Situation Assessment Tool

You may be wondering where you should start with a customer. The **Customer Goal and Financial Situation Assessment Tool** may help you figure out a beginning point.

**How does it work?** When you feel the time is right, you can simply ask a customer to complete the assessment with you. Alternatively, you might consider asking the questions and completing the tool as part of your intake.

Because the assessment is simple and only has a few key questions, you might be able to gather the information in a conversation. Reading the assessment and recording the answers may be especially useful if you are working with a customer that has limited literacy levels, is an English language learner, or with whom a question-and-answer format would be more productive.

**Introducing the assessment** may be uncomfortable if you’re not used to asking these types of questions. Module 3 of Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s [**Your Money, Your Goals Toolkit**](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/your-money-your-goals/) provides tips on starting the conversation. With the assessment, you can use a statement like the following as an introduction:

*We know that many issues in running a household involve money. One thing we would like to do is provide you with information and tools to help you manage your resources to reach your goals. To get us started, we have this questionnaire, which covers several topics. You know where you are and where you’d like to go. Your answers will help us build a plan to get you the information and tools that are going to be most useful to you right now. The information you provide is not being used by us in any other way.*

Remember, financial empowerment is a big topic. Knowing where to start can be hard, but using this assessment will help you identify what is going on with your customer and equip you with the information necessary to provide the right information, tools, or referrals.

Finally, be sure you have a system for keeping the assessments confidential. When discussing this assessment with your clients, be sure you can provide assurance of confidentiality and describe your system for keeping this information secure (e.g., a locked drawer in a file cabinet). As you proceed, be sure to follow your organization’s data policy guidelines and retention policy.

Additionally, please take steps to identify community resources that you might be able to share with your customers based on the information provided during your initial assessment discussion. You may also refer to the [**Your Money, Your Goals Toolkit**](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/your-money-your-goals/) for additional useful tips and tools.

###

## Customer Goal and Financial Situation Assessment Tool

### Your goals and financial situation

Please answer the following questions based on where you are today. There are no right or wrong answers. The purpose of this questionnaire is to ensure the right financial information and resources are provided to you to help you reach your goals.

We use the word “goals” to describe anything you would like to address related to your personal finances (your money). Your goals are **yours** and should reflect **what you want for your life** -- including aspects of your finances you want to change or improve, things for which you’d like to save, or even investments you’d like to make.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Response** |
| 1. Most people have their own idea about what it means to be financially stable or secure. What does this mean to you?
 | Comments:  |
| 1. Do you have financial goals and know how much to save to reach them?
 | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  Unsure | Comments:  |
| 1. Are you in danger of losing your housing or car because you cannot make payments or repairs?
 | Housing:[ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  Unsure | Car:[ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  Unsure |
| Comments:  |
| **Quick Tips**If yes, call 211 (if available) or local Department of Social Services center. For homeowners, call the Homeownership Preservation Foundation (HPF) **888-995-HOPE or call the CFPB Consumer Response line 855-411-CFPB (2372).** |
| 1. Are you able to cover all of your bills and monthly living expenses (including food needs) each month?
 | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  Unsure | Comments:  |
| **Quick Tips*** **Keep track** of everything you spend money on for a week.
* **Review your spending** and use this information for figuring out where you can make changes.
 |
| 1. Do you have a regular and reliable source of income (such as a job or SSI and/or SSDI or Unemployment Insurance)?
 | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  Unsure | Comments: |
| **Quick Tips**If no, call 211 (if available), Unemployment Insurance Office, State Social Services Office or local non-profit partner organizations, or, in some cases, local Social Security Field Office. |
| 1. Are you in danger of having any of your utilities shut off because of nonpayment?
 | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  Unsure | Comments:  |
| **Quick Tips**If yes, call 211 (if available) or the local department of social services or other local non-profit partner organizations. |
| 1. Do you owe a person or business money?
 | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  Unsure | Comments:  |
| **Quick Tips** * **Know your total income –** this includes any salary and benefits
* **Write down total expenses –** Add all of your expenses and other uses of cash (savings and debt repayment) for the week
 |
| 1. Do you have student loans or other debts you can’t pay?
 | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  Unsure | Comments:  |
| **Quick Tips for accessing information on** student loan repayment options:* [www.studentaid.ed.gov/repay-loans](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/repay-loans)
* [www.consumerfinance.gov/paying-for-college](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/paying-for-college)
 |
| 1. Do you have enough money set aside to cover emergencies orunexpected expenses?
 | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  Unsure | Comments:  |
| **Quick Tips** for starting a savings plan:* **Keep track** of everything you spend money on for a week.
* **Review your spending** and use this information to figure out where you can make changes.
* **Put aside a small amount** each week into a bank or credit union account; even small amounts will add up.
* See Module 6 of [Your Money, Your Goals](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/your-money-your-goals/).
 |
| 1. Have you been unable to get a job, cell phone plan, insurance, apartment, credit card, or car due to a bad credit record?
 | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  Unsure | Comments:  |
| **Quick Tips*** Pull your free annual credit report to find out what’s on your credit record at [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com).
* Contact credit reporting agencies to address errors or visit [www.consumerfinance.gov](http://www.consumerfinance.gov) with questions.
* Local credit building partner organization [INSERT LOCAL REOURCE]
 |
| 1. Do you have an account at a bank or credit union?
 | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  No, I was denied | Comments:  |
| **Quick Tips** If you do not currently have an account at a bank or credit union:* Shop around and compare several banks or credit unions. Consider:
	+ The services they offer;
	+ The interest they pay for savings accounts;
	+ The fees they charge;
	+ The amount you need to open the account; and
	+ If you have been denied an account, does the bank or credit union offer a “second chance” account?
* Ask the bank or credit union to tell you exactly why they are denying you an account.
* Review your credit report to find out if there are credit-related problems.
 |
| 1. Are you using methods other than banking (prepaid cards, check cashing services, payday loans, pawn shops, etc.) to buy things, make payments, and/or access cash?
 | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  Unsure | Comments:  |
| **Quick Tips*** Shop around for the best deal on these services. Consider:
	+ The fees they charge;
	+ The services they offer;
	+ The interest rate they charge;
* Compare these costs to those of area banks and credit unions.
	+ If you have been denied an account, see Quick Tips under #11.
 |
| 1. Do you feel like one or more of the financial services you use (such as bank or credit union account, pre-paid card, check cashing, payday loans, credit card, mortgage, etc.) costs you too much?
 | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  Unsure | Comments:  |
| **Quick Tips**Write down what your **financial service needs are, shop around,** and evaluate the following:* Location and access
* Available products
* Customer service
* Fees
* Safety and security
 |
| 1. Do you know who to call with a complaint about a financial product or service (bank or credit union account, pre-paid card, check cashing, payday loans, credit card, mortgage, etc.?
 | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  Unsure | Comments:  |
| **Quick Tips****CFPB’s Consumer Response** **Service** at [www.consumerfinance.gov/Complaint](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/Complaint) or call toll-free at (855) 411-CFPB (2372). |
| 1. Do you have financial goals identified to reach your idea of being financially secure and know how much to save to reach them?
 | [ ]  Yes[ ]  No[ ]  Unsure |  |
| Comments: (If yes, please list goals): |
| **Quick Tips** for setting financial goals:* Brainstorm a list of your hopes, wants, and dreams.
* Turn your hopes, wants, and dreams into a list of goals with timelines.
* Figure out how much you need to save each week (or month) to reach your goals.
 |

**Summary / Recommended Next Steps:**

|  |
| --- |
|  |

**Local Resources: Please list local resources you have identified here**

|  |
| --- |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

**Resources**

* **Link to Full Toolkit on Website:** [**http://www.consumerfinance.gov/your-money-your-goals**](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/your-money-your-goals)
* **Managing Cash Flow:** [**http://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/201407\_cfpb\_your-money-your-goals\_toolkit\_english.pdf**](http://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/201407_cfpb_your-money-your-goals_toolkit_english.pdf)
* **Print materials.** CFPB has developed additional quick tips that that sites can print and give out: <http://promotions.usa.gov/cfpbpubs.html>.
* **Ask CFPB** provides answers to common financial questions. This can serve as an easy reference guide for potential questions from customers: <http://www.consumerfinance.gov/askcfpb/>
* **Consumer Complaints**. Have an issue with a financial product or service? CFPB staff will forward your complaint to the company and work to get a response from them: <http://www.consumerfinance.gov/complaint/>
* Tell Your Story: Share your stories about financial products and services. <http://help.consumerfinance.gov/app/tellyourstory>

A version of Tool is included in the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau’s Your Money, Your Goals Toolkit. The CFPB has prepared this material as a resource for the public. This material is provided for educational and information purposes only. It is not a replacement for the guidance or advice of an accountant, certified financial advisor, or otherwise qualified professional. The CFPB is not responsible for the advice or actions of the individuals or entities from which you received the CFPB educational materials. The CFPB’s educational efforts are limited to the materials that CFPB has prepared.

This Tool may ask you to provide sensitive personal and financial information. The CFPB does not collect any information from you or the organization using this Tool. The CFPB is not responsible and has no control over how others may use the information that you provide to them about your personal or financial situation. Be cautious how you use this Tool. CFPB recommends that you do not include names, account numbers; that you lock up completed hard copies and encrypt completed soft copies of the Tool that contain sensitive personal and financial information; and shred hard copies that contain sensitive personal and financial information when no longer needed.

*This CFPB tool was modified by National Disability Institute with assistance from the Disability Employment Initiative*