



Lessons Learned & Recommendations

for Affordable Housing Providers

Credit Builders Alliance, with generous support from the Citi Foundation and in collaboration with Experian RentBureau and eight affordable housing providers, embarked on a three year pilot program to test the feasibility and effectiveness of affordable housing providers' reporting of monthly resident rent payments to a major credit bureau, as a credit building strategy. While the rent reporting setup process was not without challenges, all eight affordable housing organizations were able to begin reporting resident payments. CBA found that nearly 80% of residents in the pilot experienced an increase in credit score by an average of 23 points due to rent reporting, and 100% of those who had no score before adding the rental trade line ended up with a score in the upper nonprime or prime tiers. This document is intended to summarize the lessons learned and recommendations informed by the pilot regarding the development and implementation of rent reporting for credit building programs.

Managing the...

PEOPLE



PROCESS

- Map out relevant actors and decision makers and plan to strategically introduce them to the initiative.
- Good relations and effective cooperation between property/asset management and resident services departments are critical to successful implementation.
- Make sure the organization has a software representative or system administrator (ideally both) available to provide support in creating a software integration or developing and testing manual reports.

- Outline the setup process, create a timeline, and assign responsibilities. Come to a consensus on the priority level of the project, and make sure that is shared with all parties involved.
- Ensure that frontline staff receive necessary training and have the information, materials, and tools they need to successfully share the rent reporting opportunity with residents.



Program Design

Frontline Staff & Resident Interactions

- Personalize the sell. Connect rent reporting to the right financial goal (e.g., purchasing a cell phone plan without a deposit) and ensure messaging is culturally competent (e.g., does material need to be translated?).
- Focus the conversation on the credit report. It's a good starting place to begin the discussion about the residents' financial situation and steps they can take to improve it.
- Identify ways to keep residents engaged, such as mandatory meetings or incentives.

Generating Resident Interest & Engagement

- Begin a credit education campaign before starting rent reporting outreach. The campaign will lay the foundation for the rent reporting message.
- Leverage trusted relationships. Who do residents trust and look to for support? Resident services staff, management office staff, members of the resident advisory board? Use trusted sources to spread the word about the benefits of rent reporting to build credit.
- Incorporate rent reporting for credit building outreach and enrollment into existing resident touch points or interactions (e.g., at application or annual lease renewal). Consider incorporating rent reporting outreach into established programming (workshops, coaching, benefits screening).

Getting Everyone on the Same Page

- Make sure that program leaders, frontline staff, and residents all know and agree on when rent is due each month and what the rules and culture are around grace periods.
- Clearly identify and outline for all stakeholders how the specific objectives of the rent reporting for credit building initiative align with the organization's overall mission.
- Think early and often about how program outcomes will be tracked, measured, and communicated. Developing a few clear and concise objectives will help.