

FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT CENTER
October 15, 2021

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the County of Hawai'i's Financial Empowerment Center?

The Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) is a partnership between the County of Hawai'i, the Cities of Financial Empowerment Fund, Hawai'i Community Foundation, Hawaiian Community Assets and Hawai'i First Federal Credit Union. It offers free one-on-one professional financial counseling to all residents of the Big Island regardless of income.

Who is eligible for counseling from the FEC?

The FEC is for all Hawai'i County residents, 18 or over. There is no income nor asset restrictions. FEC counselors can help with topics ranging from personal finances to business finances. If you need accessibility accommodations, please let us know in advance of the appointment.

How much does this service cost?

FEC counseling is always free. This includes services like pulling credit reports and scores.

What can a counselor help me with?

FEC counselors can help you with a range of topics from personal finance to business finances. Counselors help clients better manage their money, improve their credit score, pay down debt, increase savings, establish and build credit, and provide access to safe and affordable banking products. Counselors can also help to create a customized plan to address student loans, buy a house, build financial goals for your business, or start an emergency fund.

How long are counseling sessions?

Counseling sessions can range from 30 - 60 minutes.

How can I ask a quick question to a counselor?

This program is meant for one-on-one counseling services to reach short and long term goals. If they have any questions, they can call or email a counselor.

What can I expect from my first counseling session?

The initial appointment may take about 1 hour, it involves answering questions based on their finances, banking and financial goals so that we can get a detailed picture of where they are and where they want to go financially and how they want to proceed towards their goals.

Where can I request an appointment with a counselor?

Initial appointments can be requested online on any of our service providers websites or you can call them directly to schedule an appointment.

Contact information:

Hawaiian Community Assets

Website: https://fecpublic.force.com/fecbot/s/referral?c__city=0010f00002VgXTjAAN
Phone: (808) 934-0801

Hawaii First Federal Credit Union

Website: <https://www.hawaiiirstfcu.com/financial-empowerment-center/>
Phone: (808) 933-6600

County of Hawaii, Office of Housing and Community Development

Website: <https://tinyurl.com/f93d2bk4>

What should I bring to my initial counseling session?

You are not required to bring any documentation for the first session. However, documents such as pay stubs, account statements, bills, and other financial documents could be helpful in developing a budget and understanding debt and credit issues.

How many times can I meet with a counselor?

You can meet with counselors as many times as needed.

What is the difference between financial advising and financial counseling?

Counselors can help you think through how to save for retirement, but can't help you on what funds or types of funds to invest your money in. Counselors assist clients by talking through their options. Ultimately the client makes the decisions on how they want to invest their money.

What languages do you offer?

We offer services in English. If you're interested in conducting a session in a language other than English, please let us know when you book your appointment.

Are counselors certified or trained?

Counselors are trained and certified through the Cities for Financial Empowerment (CFE) Fund curriculum. They are required to complete the training course and pass the certification exams.

Is any of my personal financial information collected by FEC counselors?

FEC counselors do not access nor collect your financial information. FEC counselors only have the financial information you provide to them.

Will counselors come to my home and do sessions?

Counseling sessions are done at each of our sites or virtually. Counselors can conduct phone or video sessions if we are able to collect signatures on the disclosures before the initial session.