WE CAN’T DO THIS ALONE!
Partnering to answer the need for financial literacy programming in Greeley, Colorado
Professor Annie Epperson, Coordinator of Engagement & Academic Programming, Natural Sciences Librarian
Assistant Professor Nicole R. Webber, Business & Communication Librarian

ABSTRACT
Three institutions came together to bring Money Smart Week (MSW), a national initiative promoting financial literacy, to a Northern Colorado community in 2019. Representatives from a community college, a public library district, and a university partnered to address varied financial topics in sessions appealing to diverse audiences.

By The Numbers

98% found value in the event they attended
4,004 Events
3,806 Partners
152,036 Attendees
45 States

99% were likely to recommend a Money Smart Week event

PARTNERS WITH A PURPOSE
The American Librarian Association, representing thousands of libraries nation-wide, are considered national champions of the initiative.

Initially, librarians from the University of Northern Colorado, Aims Community College, and High Plains Library District brainstormed how to best meet the financial literacy needs of our different constituents. As the project progressed, staff and faculty from different parts of the institutions, such as the Office of Financial Aid and the Early College Academy, stepped in to assist in planning and marketing, and to provide programming and incentives.

“...while well-meaning institutions can often jump on board an initiative like MSW, they often replicate each other’s work and draw from the same community, and so their efforts detract rather than build upon one another. What I really appreciated about working together with everyone this year was that by coordinating the programming and the advertising, we were able to create a large event spanning our service area and will hopefully build some momentum as we move forward with it in years to come.”
– David Sharp, High Plains Library District

GROUNDWORK FOR SUCCESS
We consulted with a librarian at Colorado State University who had hosted MSW events in previous years. Her input regarding successes and lessons learned was very valuable.

We set up whiteboards around the University of Northern Colorado campus to find out which topics people, particularly students, would be most interested in learning more about. Credit, debt, and retirement were popular topics.

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LESSONS LEARNED
Partnering with organizations outside of the usual library team revealed:

- The shared values of those who serve learners in our community; financial aid staff hold many of the same values as campus librarians and educators.
- The strength of synergy brought on by sharing resources (facilities, speakers, incentives, marketing efforts) brought increased visibility of the project while sharing effort.
- Partners are out there! Often there’s an unspoken sense of collegiality just waiting for an invitation.
- Projects may take a year or two to really take off.
- Connection to a larger effort, at the national or state level, provides resources, ideas, and support that makes possible a venture into new territory.

CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES
Partnering with organizations beyond campus presented both challenges and rewarding successes. Simple logistics such as planning face-to-face meetings revealed small challenges for centrally-located spaces with readily-accessible low-cost parking and necessary technology. Answering these needs provided a chance to become familiar with one another’s facilities and policies, an enhanced benefit to those on the planning team.

The desire to address a greater variety of constituents’ needs and interests magnified the amount of red tape around financing and incentives, while opening up the pool of topics, avoiding competition for overlapping audiences, and increasing the draw of incentives in the form of scholarships.

CONTACT US!
Annie.Epperson@unco.edu
Nicole.Webber@unco.edu
Greeley Money Smart Week Guide: libguides.unco.edu/personalfinance
Money Smart Week Website: www.moneysmartweek.org/