



TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

New Initiatives and Programs

Moving Training into the Vanguard



BY PAUL KEALEY

As part of Neighborhood Reinvestment's strategic goal of being in the vanguard of the community development field, the Training Division has been planning a new focus and direction that will let us expand our offerings and continue to meet the changing and diverse needs of community development professionals.

We have assembled special committees and discussion groups, and have sought and digested feedback from the community development field, including NeighborWorks® organizations.

If you have walked through our offices in the past few months, you will have seen a group of dedicated individuals pulling together to plan and implement a number of new and exciting initiatives the division is undertaking. Now, it is my pleasure to share with you some of these initiatives and programs.

The highlights include greatly expanded homebuyer education training and certification, new organizational oversight for community development boards, new initiatives in rural development, Native American community development, intermediate and advanced community development training, and e-learning for community development practitioners. We also will expand our offerings in Spanish and enhance our training institute symposia.

Homebuyer Education

Homeowner education and counseling offer enormous economic benefit to both lenders and homebuyers. Researchers with Freddie Mac recently found that face-to-face prepurchase homebuyer education and counseling have a measurable impact on loan performance, reducing loan defaults by up to 34 percent.

Home-ownership counseling helps underserved populations including low- and moderate-income, minority, new immigrant, and female-headed households avoid foreclosure, ruined credit, susceptibility to predatory lenders, and emotional distress.

Neighborhood Reinvestment is viewed by many as providing the finest homebuyer training-of-trainers and certification in the industry. Currently, we certify about

500 trainers and counselors a year through our institutes and regional workshops. But the unmet demand for such training and certification of trainers and counselors is enormous.

To meet this demand, the Training Division plans to increase to at least 800 the number of individuals certified as counselors and trainers. We will also develop unique e-learning opportunities to allow those trained and certified to maintain certification and upgrade their knowledge on an annual basis. Should additional funding become available, Neighborhood Reinvestment is prepared to increase the training to 2,000 a year.

Board Strengthening

The role that boards of directors play in the fiscal and organizational oversight of community development organizations is increasingly important as these organizations strive to achieve new levels of home ownership, affordable housing, and neighborhood revitalization in their communities with limited but crucial private- and public-sector resources.

Just as in the corporate world, appropriate scrutiny is being applied to ensure financial soundness and operational accountability. Neighborhood Reinvestment intends to enhance the training it provides to community development board members and increase the skills and tools that its management consultants provide to the boards of network organizations.

The Corporation intends to expand its core classes for board members conducted at Neighborhood Reinvestment Training Institutes and delivered locally at NeighborWorks® organizations around the country. This new training will cover such topics as the roles and responsibilities of a board; the board-staff partnership – who is accountable for what; fiscal accountability and oversight; and program assessment and evaluation.

In addition, we will develop a new certification course called Fiscal Oversight for Board Treasurers. We aim to have all NeighborWorks® board treasurers certified within three years of the launch of this new course. We hope that an additional 100 board members from non-network

community development organizations around the county will also benefit from this training each year.

Rural Development

The need for community development efforts to assist low- and moderate-income individuals in rural communities is great. Too often, however, support for these efforts is lacking. Neighborhood Reinvestment intends to grow its rural development training program, currently consisting of five courses, to a full curriculum of 12, focusing on home ownership and lending, economic development, and community revitalization.

In addition, we plan to offer again in 2004 a regional, rural Chautauqua, which would involve 100 individuals working in rural community development, including the executive director and a board member from each rural NeighborWorks® organization. The Chautauqua will involve skill-training from experienced trainers, peer-learning sessions, presentations by rural experts, and a visit to single-family and multifamily developments.

Native American Community Development

Two courses specific to Native American home ownership were offered at the Minneapolis training institute in fiscal year 2002. Neighborhood Reinvestment is in the process of developing four courses (beginning with San Francisco in December) specifically tailored to increasing Native American home-ownership rates and addressing community development issues unique to Indian country.

Intermediate and Advanced Training

Neighborhood Reinvestment will develop a stronger selection of intermediate and advanced-level courses, for which there is a tremendous demand among experienced community development practitioners. These intermediate courses for experienced practitioners and advanced clinics for senior staff will offer hands-on courses on timely, relevant issues.

The one- to three-day, intensive skills-development courses will be offered at training institutes. Many will require a significant commitment from participants to submit work in advance and use the on-site resources available – experts and peers – to resolve issues. Participants will be encouraged to maintain contact with their peers and experts via listserves. In some cases, follow-up Web-based learning sessions will also be provided. (See description of e-learning, below.)

E-Learning

As a leader in community development education, Neighborhood Reinvestment must respond to the burgeoning demand from community development practitioners for e-learning opportunities. The Corporation will develop a set of Web-based courses that support Programs of Study and classes offered at institutes. Both facilitated live on-line and self-instructional modules will be developed and offered as follow-up to face-to-face trainings.

Courses will be developed in each of the eight curriculum tracks: affordable housing, community building, community economic development, construction and production management, home ownership and community lending, management and leadership, neighborhood revitalization, and rural development.

Training Offered in Spanish

Neighborhood Reinvestment's five-day homebuyer education training was delivered in Spanish at the San Francisco 2002 institute and at an earlier regional training event cosponsored with Fannie Mae. The course is scheduled to be delivered again in Spanish at the Washington, D.C., institute in August 2003. As the demand for courses in Spanish continues to grow, the Training Division, with support from MetLife, is addressing this demand by translating a series of additional courses and associated materials into Spanish and offering them in Spanish in fiscal year 2004 and beyond.

Training Institute Symposia

In addition to training courses, Neighborhood Reinvestment Training Institutes also present one-day symposia on cutting-edge topics and issues in the community development field. These centerpiece events draw close to 200 experts and practitioners from across the country.

Remaining topics in 2003 are "Working Together to Change the Face of Home Ownership" (with support from Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae, State Farm Insurance, and others), August 20 in Washington, D.C., and a symposium on rural community development issues and strategies, December 10 in San Francisco. ■

Paul Kealey (pkealey@nw.org) is Neighborhood Reinvestment's director of training.

First Management and Leadership Graduate

'I Left Each Class with Something New'

BY JULIE KURZWEIL

"I believe Programs of Study add focus and discipline for both students and faculty members," said Paul Rechlin, executive director of Lewis & Clark CommunityWorks, a Bismarck, North Dakota, NeighborWorks® organization. "I left each class with something new."

Rechlin is the first graduate in the Management and Leadership Program of Study from Neighborhood Reinvestment Training Institute.

"For students," he said, "the Programs of Study encourage a continuum of learning. Faculty focus on teaching what is most important, and then reinforce those important concepts through tests."

Since 1984, Rechlin has served as executive director of the Lewis & Clark Regional Community Council, a 10-county economic and community development organization. For the past three years, he has served concurrently as executive director of Lewis & Clark CommunityWorks, which is focused primarily on affordable housing issues. Lewis & Clark serves some of the poorest agricultural counties in North Dakota as well as Indian reservations. Prior to working in community development, Rechlin served as a reporter and editor for several Chicago area daily newspapers.

Rechlin first attended a Neighborhood Reinvestment Training Institute in 1999, and enrolled in the Management and Leadership Program of Study in July 2001. He completed his professional certificate requirements in December 2002.

Immediate Benefits

For Rechlin, many of the Management and Leadership courses helped guide and reinforce the activities upon which he and his organization were focused, and reminded him of things he knew but was not doing or had not implemented. "The courses gave me different perspectives, different angles," Rechlin said, "and in some cases, because

of that, we changed our operations at Lewis & Clark."

Rechlin appreciated that several faculty members provided him with technical assistance on matters relating to their courses when he contacted them months after the training.

Rechlin found the course "Developing a Winning Business Plan" particularly useful, because Lewis & Clark at the time was writing its own business plan. He was able to use what he learned in the course to help guide

employees and consultants at Lewis & Clark. The course provided him with clarity to help guide his thinking in creating the plan, and, remarked Rechlin, "allowed us to crystallize what our expectations were."

Lewis & Clark changed several aspects of its operations as a result of the information Rechlin walked away with from the Management and Leadership Program of Study. For instance, Rechlin modified Lewis & Clark's personnel policies and hiring practices to better protect the organization. They added "at will" language to personnel policies, and developed

solutions for situations where employment applicants' past employers were not allowed to report anything but employment dates in background checks.

The Program of Study experience also helped Rechlin with fundraising strategies. "I got some great insights and tips," he said, "on how to better present our case to potential funders, and that has more than paid for the cost of attending the training institutes."

Purpose of the Program

"The Management and Leadership Program of Study," according to Christina Deady, training consultant for the Management and Leadership Program of Study, "guides those who are – or will be – community development leaders through a comprehensive series of courses on the topics most essential to them and their work."

Deady called Rechlin "an exemplary candidate whose



Paul Rechlin



input has added value to the program.” He was the first of many graduates to come, she said. Three more have graduated since Reclin finished, and the list will continue to grow.

“As more people complete the program and provide feedback,” Deady said, “the courses will not remain

stagnant but will continue to address the ever-changing needs of the professional certificate candidates.” ■

Julie Kurzweil (jkurzweil@nw.org) is a marketing consultant at Neighborhood Reinvestment.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

MetLife Supports Expanded Courses in Spanish

MetLife has generously provided \$100,000 to translate four additional Neighborhood Reinvestment Training Institute courses into Spanish: “Homebuyer Education Methods: Training the Trainer,” “Housing Counseling,” “Fundamentals of Residential Lending,” and “Financial Fitness: Teaching Financial Management Skills.” This will allow the training institute to help respond to the growing number of Spanish-speaking community development professionals. Watch for more details on course offerings in Spanish at www.nw.org/training.

Alan Arthur Honored with Faculty Award



Alan Arthur PHOTO BY SEAN BENNETT

Alan Arthur, executive director of the Central Community Housing Trust (CCHT), an award-winning Minneapolis nonprofit, was honored with the Faculty Award at the Atlanta 2003 Neighborhood Reinvestment Training Institute. Arthur was recognized for the commitment to excellence in training he has

demonstrated in the areas of affordable housing and community development and for the many community development practitioners who have benefited from his teaching, knowledge and experience. Arthur teaches the “Affordable Housing Development” course at training institutes and has been an active instructor of affordable housing development, financing, construction and nonprofit administration for the past 15 years. Arthur has more than 31 years experience in affordable housing development, and is a former developer and owner of a single-family construction business. Under Arthur’s leadership, CCHT has developed more than 1,100 quality affordable housing units and has more than 400 units of affordable housing under development.

Multifamily Symposium

In April, Nicolas Retsinas, director of Harvard University’s Joint Center for Housing Studies, presented new research findings at the NeighborWorks® Multifamily Symposium in Chicago that make the case for multifamily

housing as a cornerstone for healthy communities.

More than 250 community development leaders, elected officials, developers, planners and educators attended the symposium, “The Vitality of America’s Working Neighborhoods: Meeting the Local Challenges to Multifamily Housing,” which was supported by Fannie Mae, Bank One, and Freddie Mac. It was Neighborhood Reinvestment’s third annual symposium on multifamily housing.

Special speakers were New Haven Mayor John DeStefano Jr., president, National League of Cities; Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino, president, U.S. Conference of Mayors; and Norman Rice, president and chief executive officer, Federal Home Loan Bank of Seattle. For details, please turn to page 48.

First Kevin Bibbs Scholarship Awarded



Letha Thomas, with certificate

Letha Thomas of Community Action Project of Tulsa County, Oklahoma, a NeighborWorks® organization, received the first Kevin Bibbs Memorial Scholarship at the Neighborhood Reinvestment Training Institute in Atlanta in February. She was nominated by Neighborhood Reinvest-

ment’s South Central District. The scholarship will be awarded five times a year to members of NeighborWorks® organizations. It honors the memory and contributions of Kevin Bibbs, who served as director of community-development lending at Freddie Mac.

Latino Symposium

In February, some 150 community development professionals gathered in Atlanta for Neighborhood Reinvestment Training Institute’s symposium on “The New Americana: Impacts of the Increasing Latino Presence in Housing and Community Development.” The symposium explored the housing and community development needs of Latinos and ways to better include them in our nation’s housing and economic systems. For details, please turn to page 54.