

Secure Community Resources and Partnerships

Some credit unions will find it impossible to serve Hispanics without help from their fellow credit unions.

Fortunately, credit unions helping other credit unions is a long-standing tradition. For example, the Shapiro Group, founded at the California Credit Union League in 1992, is a cooperative effort to pool the resources of the credit union community to help small credit unions operate efficiently and effectively. The cooperative philosophy of the credit union movement provides the foundation for this specialized assistance program.

While not specifically focused on serving the Hispanic market, the purpose of the Shapiro Group is to promote and maintain the uniqueness and activities of smaller credit unions by assisting them to identify and fulfill their needs *through the coordinated mutual sharing of resources*.

Similarly, there are credit unions like State Employees Credit Union, Raleigh, N.C., and Self-Help Credit Union, in Durham, N.C., that have provided operational and back-office support or technical assistance for others. State Employees provides back-office support to Latino Community Credit Union in Durham, N.C., while Self-Help provides technical assistance.

The point is that there are credit unions that make it their goal to assist other credit unions with office services, and, if needed, managerial support. Of course, finding credit unions willing to share resources or become partners requires some research and often negotiating skills. The best place to start looking for possible credit union partnerships is with your state league.

As always, it's a good idea to commit a partnership arrangement you have with any credit union or community resource partner in writing, setting out what each partner will accomplish, how it will be accomplished, and any important deadlines and responsibilities, so that both parties are clear on their roles. This may be something informally done in a letter between the parties or it may be formalized in a written agreement executed by your credit union's attorney.



