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“We frequently receive calls from the DMP group at Accel to see what they can do for us. With Accel, we have that relationship so we can ensure our members are taken care of and it’s not going to cost them anything.”

GreenPath’s Accel program is treated as a member resource throughout SECU, with the marketing department and other areas often working to connect members with Accel.

When members fall behind on loans, collections department employees often refer members to Accel. When Accel proposes a DMP to help a member manage his or her debts, SECU reviews the proposal.

If SECU approves the plan, then SECU adjusts its loans to bring the member “current” on payments. Any missed or late payments are tacked onto the end of the loan, rather than asking members to “catch up” with additional payments. Based on member needs, rates and payment amounts also may be adjusted.

## Training Boosts Referrals

SECU offered GreenPath’s onsite staff training in 2009 to boost employee awareness. As a result,

monthly call volume steadily increased from 270 calls in March 2009 to 559 calls in May 2012.

A GreenPath partner relations specialist regularly visits the credit union to sit in on meetings with marketing and collections staff and offer referral tips. Regular “refreshers” at training sessions and meetings remind employees to offer GreenPath’s Accel program as an option to members. As of August 2012, 445 members were using a DMP through Accel to repay debts.

Findlay notes that it’s important to use Accel’s services as a way to help members tackle all their debts, including those owed to creditors other than the credit union.

“The reason for a member’s delinquency is typically that the member is overextended,” Findlay says. “Our job is not just to help with the SECU loan, but to help members learn how to manage all their finances so they become financially savvy.”

Members who pursue counseling through GreenPath’s Accel program typically want to honor their financial commitments. Retaining these members ultimately will pay off when their finances improve and they return to the credit union for loans and other financial products.

## SECU Shares Best Practices

**1 Build a “partner” relationship.** SECU and Accel work together to reach the credit union’s goals and serve its members. SECU shares its demographic information and other data to support Accel’s efforts.

**2 Use GreenPath’s Accel training.** Invite Accel

representatives to meet with credit union employees to explain the program and how to make referrals.

**3 Advertise.** Use pamphlets, brochures, newsletters, and posters to let members know they have free access to the Accel program.

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GreenPath Debt Solutions is a nationwide, 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization that provides financial counseling and education services to help consumers pay their debts, resolve housing issues, and manage money more effectively. GreenPath partners with credit unions across the country, offering program options such as the GreenPath Referral and Education Program and the GreenPath Accel Program to deliver face-to-face and phone-based financial counseling that helps members achieve their financial goals while improving bottom line results for credit unions.

“Many members come back and thank us for the suggestion to talk to Accel,” Findlay says.

## Coastal FCU: A Complete Package

Coastal Federal uses GreenPath’s Accel program to provide a complete package of financial assistance tools to members, according to Trina Jones, Coastal Federal’s member assistance program supervisor.

The Accel program works in conjunction with Coastal Federal’s internal member assistance program, which assists borrowers who are experiencing a financial hardship and cannot pay their loans as agreed. Loan officers review members’ credit reports, debt-to-income ratio, budget analysis, and net-worth statement to assess the situation before calling the member to conduct an interview and create a plan of action.

“As one step in the plan of action, the loan officer may refer the member to Accel based on information gathered from the application,” Jones says. “Once contact is made between the member and Accel, Coastal allows Accel to work their magic with the member.”

Any Coastal Federal employee also can make a referral to Accel, prompted by member needs.

“Our collections department listens for key statements such as, ‘I have changed jobs and my income has been reduced,’ or ‘My payroll falls on a different day of the month and I haven’t been able to adjust my budget to the change,’” Jones says.

Coastal also offers Accel to all members through a link on its website.

## Early Intervention

Accel has held two on-site trainings for Coastal Federal employees who work in collections, loss mitigation, and member assistance with the goal of reaching members at an earlier stage of financial difficulty, Jones says.

## The Full Package

Coastal FCU relies on GreenPath’s Accel program to serve members with:

- Debt management plans
  - Financial counseling
  - Credit education
  - Budget and money management education
  - First-time home buyer preparation
  - Financial crisis situations
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## Coastal FCU Members Give Feedback

Following a counseling session, members are asked, “What do you feel was the most important benefit you received from your counseling session?” Members’ answers include:

- “Identification of the root money problem I’m having; ways to reduce my expenses.”
  - “My counselor was understanding and he wanted to help me and I felt relieved after we were through. I wasn’t as stressed as I was before I talked to him.”
  - “Treated with respect, not talked down to.”
  - “How to improve my credit score using your debt solutions and counseling.”
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GreenPath’s Accel partner relations specialist also hosted a “lunch and learn” session on financial health for all Coastal Federal employees.

Building a “true partnership” with Accel is an important part of using Accel counseling and DMPs to reduce delinquency and loan losses, Jones says. The GreenPath partner relations specialist is always available by telephone or in person to answer questions or suggest creative ways to promote the service.

Jones notes that GreenPath counselors are certified by the National Foundation for Credit Counseling. She praises counselors’ commitment to treating members with respect while addressing financial issues through collaborative learning and communication; using negotiation to overcome conflict; and identifying the source of financial difficulties.

Working in partnership with Accel creates a “win-win” for Coastal Federal and its members, Jones says.

“In my opinion, DMPs play a significant role in assisting Coastal Federal in collecting funds and reducing losses,” Jones says. “Through a DMP, a member can reduce his or her debts up to 50%, freeing up funds so the member is in a position to make his or her payments to Coastal Federal, as agreed.”

### For More Information

Visit [cunastrategicservices.com/greenpath](http://cunastrategicservices.com/greenpath) or contact Doug Brady from GreenPath at 248-553-5400 ext. 3127.



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