



## Educating Tomorrow's Homebuyers Today

**Monica La Crue** [00:00:00] Welcome to Empower Your Outreach, where we explore perspectives from leading industry experts and influencers on trending homeownership insights to strengthen your trusted role as a real estate professional for your clients and the communities we serve. I'm Monica La Crue your host and today we have a great guest joining us. Maheen Qureshi is a senior manager on our Housing Outreach Team here at Freddie Mac. She's part of our Single-Family Division and we're happy to have her here. She's going to share some insights and perspectives on creating homeownership opportunities through new offerings, low in costs for loan originations, all with the focus on reaching underserved communities. So before we dive in, Maheen, welcome to Empower Your Outreach. How are you doing today?

**Maheen Qureshi** [00:00:41] Thanks so much, Monica. I'm excited to be here. I'm doing well. Thank you and hope you are too. And I just want to thank everyone for listening today.

**Monica La Crue** [00:00:49] Awesome. So, let's get started. First, we want to start off by discussing one of our great resources that we have here at Freddie Mac. And it's our CreditSmart® program. Can you give us some insights on the program and why real estate professionals should be familiar with its benefits?

**Maheen Qureshi** [00:01:03] Absolutely. So, Monica CreditSmart is a program that's been around for about 22 years that Freddie Mac offers across America totally free. It is a suite of resources that span financial capability all the way to homeownership education. And we have got a relatively new curriculum called CreditSmart Essentials®. So, as you can imagine, it's over 20 years old. So, we've been overhauling our legacy tools, and there are some really exciting newer ones that we really think that real estate professionals are going to want to know about. CreditSmart Essentials is our financial capability curriculum. You know, it's mobile first. It's accessible, it's empowering. We've tried to make it fun; we've gamified it. It's personalized and basically it gets into topics ranging from building good credit to debt management, money management, even the psychology of money. Also, you can learn about your rights as a consumer and your responsibilities as it relates to your finances. We have information on disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and then of course, steps to homeownership. There's more too. But you know, we definitely hope that real estate professionals check it out. And CreditSmart Essentials is available in English and Spanish.

**Monica La Crue** [00:02:21] Awesome. Yeah. Free resources. I love the word free. So right now research is really showing us that even though millennials are more educated, not all are considered to be financially knowledgeable compared to prior generations. Millennials are currently driving the first-time homebuyer market right now, so how can CreditSmart bring value to these buyers?



**Maheen Qureshi** [00:02:40] Yeah, that's a really good question. You know the personal finance space can be overwhelming. I mean, just thinking, you know, even from our own perspectives, we can Google information, we can watch videos, we can follow people on social media. At the same time, a lot of this is not taught when we're younger. And so, as you said, finding out that millennials have that lower level of financial knowledge, there are ways to address that. And so we want to make sure that millennials and other demographics are aware that these tools that we have are free. They are trustworthy. You know, a lot of times people are caught off guard by scammers, people taking advantage. You know what? Who can you trust? Who are the trusted advisors, the real estate professionals in the community, the credit counselors, the housing counselors, the lending community? You know, who are the different players that, aspiring homebuyers can work with? And then also just taking that, empowering yourself, being able to use the tools and the curricula that are out there with CreditSmart to really do that preparation so that when you're going to the real estate professional, you are really coming with those intelligent and, and, and good questions that are going to help you make the best decisions, right, as you go on your homeownership journey.

**Monica La Crue** [00:04:00] Yeah, I myself am a millennial, and I always share the story of when I go out to eat to dinner with my girlfriends. Right. I want those credit card points. So, I'm pulling out that Amex Gold, right? Give four times for those credit card points and you swipe the card. And now everyone is sending me those Venmo transactions. Right now, I have to go back to my budget and figure out how to do that. So, I know that there's probably a lot of people that are managing money very differently than what their parents did. You know, when I was in high school, they didn't teach us how to manage our credit, our debt. There's a lot of millennials who don't know the difference between credit and debt. And if it's not being taught in school and it's not being taught at home, there is a lot of people who are entering adulthood not really knowing how to manage money. My dad balanced a checkbook. I don't even know where checks are in my house right now. So it's very different circumstances than what our parents experienced when they were trying to purchase a home. And so Credit Smart is a great tool that's going to educate people on how to manage their money in today's very tech advanced environment.

**Maheen Qureshi** [00:05:02] Absolutely. I couldn't agree more.

**Monica La Crue** [00:05:05] So we know that homebuyer education can help prepare the buyer for their home purchase. What other benefits does homebuyer education offer the consumer?

**Maheen Qureshi** [00:05:14] Absolutely. So, you know, homeownership education can equip buyers with the trust, the tools that we're talking about, again, in order to figure out who are the professionals that I can work with. And then if you need additional support, you know, once you're in the home, often people's budgets may be stretched if



there's a hardship. And also just for the regular repairs, maintenance, sometimes renovations and upgrades that people want to make to their home. How can people do that? Again, like you mentioned, the B-word, the budget, you know, in a way that they're really on top of able to manage their money and make the choices and the tradeoffs that they may need to have that not just rainy day fund, but also that homeownership fund, really for the different types of things you do with the home while you're owning it. And then we want to help people hopefully prevent foreclosure if a hardship does come up. So the other benefit of knowing that you can turn to one of our courses, which is called CreditSmart HomebuyerU® is it is a course I've mentioned CreditSmart Essentials. That's our financial capability curriculum. So now we've got credit to my HomebuyerU as well. Since the last several years that's been available in Spanish and English. And it's online. It's very robust. And it is going to walk the aspiring homebuyer through all the steps from the money management piece and credit piece, you know, thinking like a lender, working with different professionals along the journey. And then the mortgage process, all the different types of loan products out there and then getting the keys to the home, you know, when you go past the closing table. But really now that's the beginning of that homeowner's journey. And so what are some tips and tools that they can have at their fingertips to be able to sustain homeownership? Right. So those are some of the benefits, I think, of homeownership education and credit to HomebuyerU is our course that has a lot of tools available in that realm.

**Monica La Crue** [00:07:11] I love sharing CreditSmart HomebuyerU with our real estate professionals. I definitely think that a prepared buyer is the best type of buyer to work with, right? We encourage everyone to go through those courses because the buyer is then going to probably ask more questions about the homeownership process, right? Can you share any success stories about, you know, some consumers who have gone through the education and have turned into actual homeowners?

**Maheen Qureshi** [00:07:37] Yeah, those are the success stories that inspire me and our team to continue to improve our work and do more in this space, right? So we really want to make our courses and our tools relatable. We want to make them empowering. We want to make them accessible. And we've been just really happy to hear some success stories, some testimonials from young people, millennials, older people, everybody. It's really for everybody, wherever you are. And that journey as an aspiring homebuyer, we hear that the sooner consumers are knowledgeable and aware that these courses and tools exist, Monica, the more they can actually start to make certain choices, right? Like the process of going through which neighborhood you want to buy a home in. You know, maybe I'm thinking about my kids future school. Do you want to maybe prioritize some of the details of your home purchase and make some tradeoffs? You may come equipped to working with a housing counselor, a real estate professional with a lender, with some questions a lot more prepared. So those are the success stories where we hear personally from consumers that they were able to get this education early on in their homebuying journey, and that's when they got the most help. And that actually brings me to the point that real estate professionals are so key, like



literally hold the key as well as figuratively, right, for that aspiring homebuyer, because they are the first people that a lot of buyers are turning to for help and to get started. So I hope that the credit smart resources we have can really be a tool in the real estate professionals toolkit as well for the homebuyer.

**Monica La Crue** [00:09:24] Absolutely. I think that's a great point to make, right? There's a lot of consumers out there right now and buyers that are waiting on the sidelines thinking that homeownership isn't right for them right now. What a great free resource to give to a potential buyer. Have them explore the CreditSmart Essentials and this CreditSmart HomebuyerU offerings. And then they can kind of see homeownership is right for them and they can get on that path to homeownership. So we know that the demographics of future homebuyers are changing. You mentioned CreditSmart Essentials and CreditSmart HomebuyerU are available in Spanish. Can you share why it's so important for Freddie Mac to provide in language materials for our buyers?

**Maheen Qureshi** [00:10:06] Sure. So as we know, we have many diverse communities all across America. You know, there are significant proportion of communities that are limited English proficient. So the LEP communities may need multilingual or bilingual resources. So over the years, we've made a lot of our CreditSmart education available in different languages. And so again, as we went ahead and reimagined and overhauled our legacy resources and launched essentials, launched HomebuyerU in the last several years, we've definitely made them available in English and Spanish. And you know, Monica, as we know, the Latino market, the Hispanic American homeownership rate is inching up to about 50%. And this demographic is a really large percentage of future first time homebuyers. So again, as we create our CreditSmart resources, we really are quants creating them. That's what we like to call the process. We work with experts who really understand the communities, and we want to make sure that our resources are available in an immersive way. Our website is now available in English and Spanish. We want to make sure that all the way from the imagery to the knowledge checks, the tools, the learning modules, they're all really culturally relevant. So that's what we call our transcription process. And so we were really excited when we launched Essentials last summer in Spanish as well.

**Monica La Crue** [00:11:35] I love to hear it. One last question that we have is what about for the real estate professional? I know that part of the CreditSmart Suite includes CreditSmart coach. Can you give a little bit of overview on the resources that you guys are providing for real estate professionals to impact the community?

**Maheen Qureshi** [00:11:52] Absolutely. That's a great question. So one thing that I think any real estate professional can do today is to go to CreditSmart [freddiemac.com](https://freddiemac.com), or if you forget, just Google Credit Smart and you'll find all our resources there. The real estate professional is able to grab our free promotional toolkit from our website. It's in English and Spanish today, and you can share any of the resources we're talking about. I should also want to mention that we have our military financial readiness module, and



this module developed with our partner, Veterans Association of Real Estate Professionals several years ago, is available for active-duty service members, veterans and military families so it can be used on its own or as a complement to the rest of our suite. And real estate professionals can also take advantage of a program that we have called CreditSmart Coach®. We're going to be offering it again later in the year, and it basically certifies practitioners, real estate professionals, housing counselors, community development individuals, and they can learn how to train or teach credit, smart financial capability information to the consumers and their community. And that program, you know, I would say, Monica, the best thing people can do is to subscribe to Freddie Mac Single Family Housing Professional Subscription Center, and they will be notified whenever we have webinars, credit, smart coach trainings and other free resources that are coming up.

**Monica La Crue** [00:13:20] Thank you so much for joining us today. Thank you for our listeners for tuning in to Empower Your Outreach today. We hope that you found our discussion informative and inspiring. Don't forget to subscribe to our Real Estate Professionals Resources mailing list for more insightful episodes like the one you listened to today. Also, your feedback is very important to us, so feel free to leave us a review and share your thoughts. Join us next time as we continue to explore more ways and how you can strengthen your role as a trusted advisor for your clients and the communities we serve. Until then, stay tuned. Stay engaged. This is Monica La Crue signing off. Take care and we'll see you next time.

**Maheen Qureshi** [00:13:57] Thank you.