



Hello,

Have you ever tried to get directions without knowing where you are currently?

Imagine calling your family in a panic! You are lost and need help, but you have no idea where you are! You see some caution signs (but you don't know what they mean). Your dad says, "Go north." Your mom responds, "He should go south." Your friend overhears and yells, "Absolutely not, he should go west!" That scenario seems ridiculous, but unfortunately, that is often how we get financial advice, from people who don't know where you are or what danger you are in.

***The first step to any financial success is to
determine where you are right now in your journey.***

Don't judge where you are, just honestly evaluate your location!

Sometimes our situation is due to something that was done to us, bad decisions that we made, or forces beyond our control (like a hurricane or accident). Unfortunately, dwelling on how you got there will not change your location. Instead, focus on what you need to do to move in the right direction.

The new year is about new beginnings. You don't have to reach your goal overnight. Just take a few steps in the direction that you want to go and then review where you are and take a few more.

[A great place to start is to track your expenses and your income.](#)

[This will help you create the correct directions \(i.e. a budget / spending plan\).](#)

A budget (or spending plan) is simply understanding where you are and then writing out directions to help you go in the direction that **you** want to go. [Click here](#) for a blank spending plan worksheet to help you track and create your own spending plan. Remember, the best spending plan / budget is the one you will use, so feel free to find a format that suits you!

If you feel you are in a critical financial situation or you have a goal that you must reach quickly, we recommend creating a bare-bones budget to get you to your goal faster. This is generally a temporary budget that is used to jumpstart your situation. Remember, these sacrifices are temporary until you can get your feet under you, or you have reached your goal.

[Here](#) is also an example of a bare-bones budget.

Remember, you've got this!

As a reminder, CIF's regular business hours are Monday-Friday, 8 am - 3 pm MT. We are closed on weekends. If you would like to change the date on which your payment is automatically deducted from your account, you must email us at least *five days* in advance of your currently scheduled date.

Questions? Contact loans@communityimpactfund.org.

If you would like to take advantage of the free coaching session with GreenPath, their number is 877-337-3399. Let them know that you were referred by the Community Impact Fund (CIF).

Over the next few months the Community Impact Fund will be sending you emails to support you in your financial journey. We are here to be a resource for you at any time! For questions or support, email us at loans@communityimpactfund.org



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