



Contact: William Wille, (800) 942-7124, ext. 3216; [will.wille@ilcusys.org](mailto:will.wille@ilcusys.org)

For Immediate Release

**Illinois credit unions have support in their Hispanic growth efforts**

*Illinois League, Coopera Consulting collaborate to help bridge gap between Illinois' Hispanics and CUs*

Naperville, IL., March 9, 2010 -- The Illinois Credit Union League (ICUL) and Iowa-based Coopera Consulting have partnered to provide Illinois credit unions with the tools, resources and knowledge to bring Illinois' emerging Hispanic population into the financial mainstream.

"Hispanics represent a disproportional number of the unbanked and underserved segment of the population. Without the benefits of a credit union relationship, these consumers are forced into a fringe economy that preys upon the working class," said Dan Plauda, ICUL president/chief executive officer. "The credit union movement is committed to ensuring all consumers, whether affluent or impoverished, have access to affordable financial services. In addition, credit unions will benefit from a young, growing, and loyal membership that is largely ignored by traditional financial institutions."

The League is collaborating with Coopera Consulting to strengthen its Hispanic outreach program because this credit union-owned organization has developed a comprehensive tool that compliments its REAL Solutions efforts. Plauda said he is confident this collaboration will elevate ICUL's underserved initiatives, and most importantly, help expand credit union service to a segment of the population that needs it most.

Coopera Consulting has been identified by ICUL as the best resource to motivate and assist credit unions in successfully serving the Hispanic community. As a REAL Solutions participating league, ICUL is committed to a partnership with the National Credit Union Foundation (NCUF), to help Illinois' credit unions better serve underserved populations. In addition, the Illinois Credit Union Foundation (ICU Foundation) has committed to providing grant dollars to help credit unions reach underserved populations and pursue other strategic initiatives.

Melanie Murphy, ICUL manager of member services says that "We are most excited about credit unions utilizing ICU Foundation funds to cover the cost of Coopera's services because we feel this will help credit unions establish the best foundation for sustained growth in Hispanic membership."

"Building the trust of the Hispanic market is a long-term and rewarding proposition," says Warren Morrow, CEO of Coopera Consulting. "Without a road map, credit unions often embark on this journey alone and without strategic vision. They may end up frustrated as a result or worse, they may end up retreating from the initiative all together."

To prevent well-intended but false starts, Coopera created the Hispanic Opportunity Navigator (HON). The HON is a comprehensive assessment of the opportunities and challenges in Hispanic outreach that are unique to a credit union. After completing this assessment, a credit union will have the prioritized steps necessary to become the financial institution of choice serving Hispanics within its field of membership. The League hopes that credit unions will invest in the [HON Assessment](#) and a year of Coopera's consulting/coaching services because together, these services have proven to result in success. You can also view an archived webinar about the Hispanic opportunity and the HON [on the League's Web site](#).

**-more-**

Depending on the size of the credit union and the breadth of services, the cost of the HON and a year of Coopera's consulting typically ranges from \$400 to \$1,300 per month. A credit union that applies for the League's grants has the opportunity to partially off-set these costs.

"By forming this statewide partnership, the League is taking a momentous step to secure the growth of Illinois credit unions for the future," says Morrow. "Coopera's services are a worthwhile investment, and the League's commitment will serve as a great catalyst to motivate credit unions."

Illinois credit unions interested in utilizing ICU Foundation funds to participate in the Coopera program can contact Murphy at 800-942-7124 or 630-983-3414 and identify for which grant program they qualify. While the ICU Foundation sets three grant application deadlines throughout the year, grants can be funded on a rolling basis as well. All affiliated credit unions of the League are eligible to apply.

###

***About Illinois Credit Union League***

The Illinois Credit Union League (ICUL) is the primary trade association for credit unions in Illinois, which provides members with information, legislation and education. Membership is open to any credit union operating in accordance with the Illinois Credit Union Act or the Federal Credit Union Act. There are 402 credit unions in Illinois with more than 2.7 million members.

***About Coopera Consulting***

Coopera Consulting is an economic development firm focused on emerging Hispanic markets that present unique growth opportunities for credit unions. Coopera is owned by the Iowa Credit Union League and is a strategic partner of the Credit Union National Association (CUNA). With CUNA's commitment to help credit unions serve Hispanics, Coopera is able to offer credit unions assessment tools, but also educational training solutions, consulting services, translation services and Hispanic consumer products. Coopera's bicultural and bilingual staff works with credit unions nationwide. For more information visit [www.cooperaconsulting.com](http://www.cooperaconsulting.com).