

# DOCTOR CRA

by John Olson



Dear Dr. CRA:

*I can't believe I missed the National Interagency Community Reinvestment Conference in New Orleans! The agenda looked like it had lots of important information for CRA officers like me. Can you share some of the highlights and lessons learned from the conference?*

Sincerely,  
Missed Important Affair

Dear MIA,

We're sorry you missed it, too! The event went very well, with over 700 attendees enjoying four days of information, discussion, learning, and networking. As you saw, the conference was divided into four tracks: the CRA compliance track, which covered everything from preparing for an exam to CRA program management best practices (more on that later); the community development track, which covered a potpourri of hot topics from the role of behavioral economics in financial education to building an inclusive green economy; the investment track, which offered information on specific investment instruments as well as tips on managing an investment portfolio; and the National Community Development Lending School, which included hands-on classes for underwriting community development loans.

CRA officers, in particular, will benefit from looking through the material from the CRA track. The sessions that focused on the regulations featured expert panelists from all four regulatory agencies who provided an overview of the CRA examination process, including how to prepare yourself for your exam and detailed overviews of the exam procedures for large, intermediate small, and small institutions. One of the highlights of the track was the session on "Excellence in CRA Program Management." The panelists were Katie Garlington from Central State Bank, Lela Wingard Hughes from JP Morgan Chase, and Lisa DeClark from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Katie offered the perspec-

tive of a small community bank, and included samples of her data tracking and board reporting tools. Lela offered the large institution perspective, and in particular highlighted ten rules for managing an excellent CRA program, which serve as good reminders for every CRA officer:

1. Understand the rules of the game
2. Conduct competitive reviews
3. Remember the importance of the qualitative factors
4. Ascertain community credit needs
5. Establish a performance context
6. Establish CRA targets and performance benchmarks
7. Regularly assess performance relative to local market conditions
8. Consider and document CRA impact of business decisions
9. Communicate regularly
10. Build your program on sustainable business practices

You can learn more about these "ten rules" and access all conference materials from our website, <http://www.frbsf.org/community/conference2010.html>. We hope to see you in 2012!