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U.S. Defined Contribution Plans Overview Program Core Curriculum

The basics of the retirement industry are presented in three facilitated online courses which make up the core curriculum for the accreditation programs offered by the Society of Professional Administrators and Recordkeepers (SPARK).

The three online courses in the core curriculum include:

- *Retirement Plans and Industry Overview*
- *Plan Features and Design*
- *Participant Communications, Education and Advice*

Key Audiences

The core curriculum provides basic training for new employees and professional development for employees with specialized expertise.

Administrative

- Customer Service
- Plan Administration and Recordkeeping
- Investment Management
- Enrollment and Communication
- Back Office Operations
- Systems Support
- Plan Sponsor Staff

Sales and Marketing

- Brokers
- Agents
- Wholesalers
- Institutional Sales Staff
- Sales Support Staff

Key Benefits

Successful completion of the program will ensure that you:

- Gain an understanding of the retirement savings plans currently available in the market.
- Learn about the retirement plan market, its history, and the issues currently facing industry stakeholders.
- Acquire a solid understanding of industry concepts and vocabulary.
- Gain an understanding of the array of issues and challenges facing plan sponsors.
- Become familiar with regulatory requirements and the legislative environment.
- Develop a practical understanding of participant communications and education requirements.

Detailed Outline Online Core Curriculum

Retirement Plans and Industry Overview

- Sources of Retirement Savings
 - Mandatory
 - Subsidized
 - Nonsubsidized
- Basics of Retirement Plans
 - Social Security
 - IRAs
 - Traditional IRA
 - Roth IRA
 - Education IRA
 - Qualified Plans
 - Defined Benefit Plans
 - Pension
 - Cash Balance
 - Defined Contribution Plans
 - Profit Sharing
 - ESOP
 - 401(k)
 - SIMPLE 401(k)
 - Money Purchase
 - Target Benefit
 - Other Tax-Advantaged Plans
 - 403(b)
 - 457
 - SEP
 - SARSEP
 - SIMPLE IRA
 - Nonqualified Plans
- History of Retirement Plans in the U.S.
- Impact of Key Legislation and Rulings
- Industry Trends
- Retirement Plan Stakeholders
 - Government
 - Employers
 - Individuals
 - Service Providers
- Industry Issues
- Legislative Proposals
 - Tax Reform
 - Social Security Privatization

Plan Features and Design

- Influences on Plan Design
 - Corporate Culture
 - Employee Demographics
- Basics of Plan Design
 - Plan Selection
 - Type of Organization
 - Plan Objectives
- Key Plan Features
 - Employee Eligibility
 - Vesting
 - Plan Contributions/Limits
 - Automatic Enrollments
 - Benefit Payments
 - QDROs
 - Participant Loans
- Plan Strategies
 - Plan Fees
 - Administration/Valuation
 - Investment Objectives
 - Employee Educational Objectives
- Setting Up the Plan
 - Plan Documents
 - Individually Drafted Plans
 - Master or Prototype Plans
 - Volume Submitter Plans
 - Plan Officials
 - Plan Administrator
 - Plan Trustee
- Plan Roles and Responsibilities
 - Plan Administration and Compliance
 - Participant Recordkeeping
 - Investment Management
 - Asset Custody
 - Benefit Paying Agent
 - Participant Communications Manager
- Modifying an Existing Plan
 - Terminations
 - Mergers
 - Spin Offs

Participant Communication, Education and Advice

- Legal Requirements
 - ERISA
 - 404(c)
 - DOL Interpretive Bulletin
- Communication Objectives
- Communication Basics
- Communication Media
- Enrolling in the Plan
 - Need to Save
 - Benefits of Tax Advantaged Savings
 - Plan Features
 - Income Tax Credit
 - Investment Options
 - Access to Money in the Plan
 - Enrollment
 - Call for Action
- Plan Changes
 - Changing Service Providers
 - Changing Plan Design
- Receiving Ongoing Information
- Planning for the Future
 - Retirement Planning
 - Financial Planning
 - Investment Advice