Introduction

Home loans are available through many different sources, including mortgage banking companies, commercial banks, community banks, credit unions, savings banks, mortgage brokers, and other financial institutions.

To find a lender, you can:

- Contact your bank or financial institution.
- Consult a nonprofit housing counseling agency in your area.
- Ask family members, friends, and co-workers.
- Ask your real estate agent.

Additionally, there are many government programs that offer home loans and/or assistance to homebuyers.

Federal Programs

There are a variety of homebuyer-assistance programs sponsored by the Federal government, including programs that offer down payment assistance for low- to moderate-income home purchasers; mortgage insurance programs; special home loan programs for veterans, teachers and law enforcement officers; and loans to help revitalize inner-city housing. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has established a network of HUD-approved housing counseling agencies that can provide information on Federal programs and give you advice on buying a home, resolving credit issues, and other related matters. For more information, contact HUD at www.hud.gov or (800) 569-4287 to find a HUD-approved housing counseling agency in your area.
City and County Programs

Most cities and counties in California offer homebuyer assistance programs designed to meet the needs of their respective communities. These programs may offer home loans to first-time buyers, provide down payment assistance, offer funding for property rehabilitation and community revitalization, etc. Many of the previously described Federal and State homebuyer assistance programs are administered by cities and counties. To find out what programs are available in your community, contact your local planning, community development, and/or housing departments. Contact information can be found in the California Planners Book of Lists at www.opr.ca.gov/publications.html.

Additionally, many counties in California participate in the Mortgage Credit Certificate (MCC) program. A qualified homebuyer can obtain an MCC, which acts as a Federal income tax credit. It reduces an individual’s income tax and increases net earnings, thus allowing a buyer to more easily qualify for a mortgage. To see if your community has an MCC program, contact your local housing or redevelopment agency or ask your real estate agent, mortgage broker, or lender.

Tips for Borrowers

- Ask for a Mortgage Loan Disclosure Statement and/or a loan estimate. These documents will tell you the cost and proposed terms of the loan.
- If using the services of a mortgage broker, contact the California Department of Business Oversight at www.bbo.ca.gov or (866) 275-2677, and/or the Department of Real Estate at www.dre.ca.gov or (877) 373-4542 to make sure the mortgage broker is properly licensed.
- Consider asking the mortgage broker for references.
- Check for special programs you may qualify for with Federal, State or local government.
- Do not sign blank forms or forms you do not understand.
- Ask for copies of the forms you complete or sign.

Questions to Ask When Applying for a Home Loan

- Who is the lender?
- What is the interest rate and term of the loan?
- What is the monthly payment for principal and interest?
- How much are the property taxes and insurance?
- What is the annual percentage rate?
- What are points?
- Is a rebate being paid by the lender to the broker?
- When will I receive an estimate of my costs for the loan?
- Is there a prepayment penalty?
- Is there a balloon payment? When is it due and how much is the payment?
- Are there any up-front fees to pay?
- If I have to pay up-front fees, are they refundable?
- How long does loan approval take?
- When will the loan close and how much money must I have at closing?
- If I have a rate locked in, is it in writing?
- What happens if interest rates change during the loan process?
- If the loan does not go through, is there a cancellation charge?
- Is the loan assumable by someone later? Is there a fee?