

Program Guidelines

Program Description

The ***Opportunity Fellows Program***, an innovative leadership program for the CDFI Industry, will train a diverse cohort of CDFI leaders to lead transformational change and address inequities in access to capital in underserved communities.

Through the program, participants will develop the skills and perspective to:

- Create transformational change and innovation toward the vision of opportunity for all
- Develop skills to facilitate greater equity and inclusion for racially and ethnically diverse communities
- Lead innovation and change in their organizations, their communities, and the CDFI industry

The ***Opportunity Fellows Program*** is offered by Opportunity Finance Network with generous support from BBVA Compass. The program will be held in Birmingham, Alabama and includes experiential leadership development from world-class trainers and robust interactions with civil rights, industry, and community leaders.

The program works with three levels of CDFI leaders—Emerging, Mid-Career, and Executive. The program will intentionally focus on building leadership skills at each level and across levels. We expect to select 8-9 leaders from each of the three levels described below, for a total cohort of 24-27 leaders. We seek to select a cohort which represents the diversity of the communities served by CDFIs and encourage individuals from diverse backgrounds to apply.

- **Executive Leaders**—Executive Directors and CEOs of CDFIs are eligible.
- **Mid-Career Leaders**—CDFI department heads, team leaders, program managers, and line of business leaders. Mid-career leaders will have accountability for day-to-day operations, as well as, strategic goals. They will have a minimum of three years of supervisory experience and will currently be supervising others.
- **Emerging Leaders**—Early-career CDFI professionals recognized by their organization's leadership as highly capable and having the potential to contribute meaningfully to the mission of the organization. Emerging leaders will have at least three years of professional experience, of which at least one year is in the opportunity finance industry.

Preference will be given to applicants who have not participated in a CDFI industry leadership program in the past five years.

Over a period of nine months (March 2017 – November 2017), each group will:

- Attend two three-day training sessions with fellow CDFI leaders and leadership development professionals. The dates are March 7-9, 2017 and September 19-21, 2017.



- Attend a gathering for the Opportunity Fellows in November 2017 at the OFN Conference in Washington, D.C.
- Engage in pre-work, assessments, and on-line learning between sessions.

OFN will provide a travel stipend to partially offset the cost of travel and lodging; each participant's organization is responsible for covering the difference.

Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must be employed by a CDFI Fund Certified CDFI or an OFN Member CDFI. Applicants must demonstrate a commitment to leading transformational change and facilitating greater equity, inclusion, and diversity at their organization, in their communities, and in the CDFI industry.

Applicants must confirm in good faith that, if they are selected to participate in the ***Opportunity Fellows Program***, they:

- Will participate in all Program meetings, webinars, and conference calls, and cover any associated travel costs not covered by the Program stipend. Active participation means completing preparatory or follow-up assignments on time; openly sharing their professional successes, challenges, and failures with their group; and constructively engaging with their group members throughout the six-month program.
- Intend to continue working in the opportunity finance industry for two years after completing the program.

Selection Criteria

Successful applicants will:

- Demonstrate a desire lead transformational change and innovation in the opportunity finance industry.
- Articulate clear and ambitious goals for what they want to accomplish in their careers in the opportunity finance industry.
- Value the opportunity to work with peers and those at other levels in a collaborative way.
- Be recognized by their supervisor and peers as an individual with leadership potential or—for current leaders--the potential to grow their leadership capacity.
- Commit to learn and apply skills to facilitate greater equity and inclusion for racially and ethnically diverse communities.
- Have the organizational commitment to support to explore new approaches to leadership, transformational change, and innovation.
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