Since its founding in 1976, Colorado Enterprise Fund (CEF) has helped people build successful small businesses. Originally created to stimulate economic development in low-income, inner-city neighborhoods in Denver, CEF now serves the entire state, making loans and providing technical assistance to existing businesses and start-ups that do not qualify for traditional financing. CEF also finances and supports the development of healthy foods businesses. In 2014, 51 percent of CEF loans were to women-owned businesses; 54 percent were to low-income business owners; and 25 percent were to minority businesses.

CEF products and services include: business loans from $1,000 to $500,000 for a variety of small business needs; bilingual, in-house business advisory and coaching program for borrowers; small business training workshops and self-paced entrepreneur’s tool kit; referrals to pro bono professional services and other community resources; and federally guaranteed SBA 7(a) loans through the Community Advantage program.

Success Story: The Crunchy Grocer, Loveland, CO

At a time when America’s conventional food system is suspect and natural grocery stores aren’t always what they seem, The Crunchy Grocer wanted to offer an alternative food source. It specializes in organic and non-GMO products as well as allergen-free foods of high quality that are naturally grown, and locally sourced. In 2013, The Crunchy Grocer opened with an SBA Community Advantage loan and healthy food financing from CEF, becoming not just a store but an eatery, educational center, arts venue, and social hub for individuals “who embrace a healthier food culture and a living food culture,” says owner Jonas Buehl.