



www.wedibuffalo.org

WESTMINSTER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (WEDI)

Westminster Economic Development Initiative, Inc. (WEDI) is a certified CDFI that serves Buffalo, New York and surrounding areas, primarily through microenterprise loans to communities that face significant barriers to access to capital and asset-building opportunities.

The organization's mission is to empower economically disadvantaged people in Buffalo, with a primary focus on the West Side community. WEDI has demonstrated its success through strength in its:

- reach of populations of focus, including refugees among others
- unique approaches, including its micro food hall and retail space that synthesizes a small business incubator, startup accelerator, community meeting space, and public market
- grassroots and community orientation that solicits consistent feedback from the clients it serves as well as adjusts its operations quickly in response, evaluating its tie to outcome-driven impact

Success Story: Abyssinia Ethiopian Cuisine, Buffalo, New York

Zelalem Gemmeda fled Ethiopia when the government killed her father, mother and brother. During five years in a refugee camp in Yemen, she and her husband operated a restaurant and dreamed of giving their children what her father had wanted for her: an education.

Zelalem was accepted into a U.N. resettlement program and came to Buffalo in 2004. She opened Abyssinia Ethiopian Cuisine, a restaurant in the West Side Bazaar, the incubator operated by WEDI. Her success as a small business owner has helped her achieve her dream: her son is studying at Princeton University and her daughter is at Mercyhurst University. And she is contributing to the Buffalo economy.

Financial and Social Impact

- 105 small business microloans established 78 business startups and the expansion of an additional 27 businesses
- 250 prospective and established business owners receiving training and technical assistance process: 80% from ethnic minority groups, 51% are refugees, 2% are asylees, 10% are other immigrants, 89% are previously low-income individuals, and 46% are previously extremely low-income individuals
- 105 loans disbursed to small businesses that needed capital but lacked access to financing from other sources

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