

Opportunity Fellows Program

Program Description

The ***Opportunity Fellows Program***, an innovative leadership program for the CDFI Industry, will challenge a diverse cohort of CDFI leaders to learn about facilitating and leading systemic change (i.e., change in practices, norms and values) within their own organizations with the goal of ensuring equitable investment in underserved and disenfranchised communities.

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

- Create opportunities for critical but constructive dialogue that challenges people's values, beliefs and behaviors related to diversity, inclusion and equity;
- Evaluate organizational structures, policies and practices that either enable or discourage inclusion and equitable investment;
- Develop actionable frameworks and processes for facilitating systemic change within their organizations and the CDFI industry to promote equitable investment.

The ***Opportunity Fellows Program*** is offered by Opportunity Finance Network with generous support from BBVA Compass. The program includes experiential leadership development from world-class trainers and robust interactions with 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 that reflects 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 six months (May 2018 – October 2018), each group will:

- Attend two three-day training sessions with fellow CDFI leaders and leadership development professionals. The dates are tentatively May 8-10, 2018 and September 12-14, 2018.
- Attend a half-day gathering for the Opportunity Fellows during the OFN Conference in Chicago, October 8-11, 2018.
- 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. Applicants must demonstrate a commitment to leading systemic change that promotes greater diversity and inclusion within their organizations and equitable investment in the underserved and disenfranchised communities their CDFI serves.

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 attending the full duration of Program meetings, webinars and calls; 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 CDFI industry for at least two years after completing the program.

Selection Criteria

Successful applicants will:

- Demonstrate a desire to learn and apply skills to facilitate and lead systemic change within their CDFI and the broader industry that promotes greater inclusion of diverse perspectives and equitable investment in underserved and disenfranchised communities.
- Articulate clear and ambitious goals for what they want to accomplish in their careers in the CDFI industry to amplify the impact of investment and access to affordable capital in our nation's most struggling communities.
- Value the opportunity to work with peers and those at other levels in an open and 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.

- Have their organization's commitment to support to explore an intensive and introspective approach to organizational change for equitable impact.

The selected individuals will represent a range of backgrounds, experiences, and institutions.

To apply, you must complete the [online application](#) and submit a letter of recommendation by **February 26, 2018 at midnight Eastern Standard Time**. This paper version of the application can be used to prepare your responses. **Please advise the author of your letter of recommendation to submit the letter via email to Leadership@ofn.org with "Recommendation for: first and last name of applicant" in the subject line.**

Applicant Information and Experience

Contact information

Name:
Title:
Organization:
Email:
Phone Number:
Organization's headquarters location (city, state):
Your location (city, state):
Organization asset size:

Which level are you applying for? Select one.

Executive (*Executive Directors and CEOs*)

Mid-Career (*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 (*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.*)

Years in current position:

Previous position and organization:

If the previous position was NOT working at a CDFI, have you worked at a CDFI previously?

Yes
No

How many total years have you worked in the CDFI industry, including your present position and any other positions where you were employed by a CDFI?

Executive Leaders and Mid-Career Leaders:

How many people do you supervise? Include direct and indirect reports.
(If you don't supervise any staff, please enter "0")

Please list any prior leadership training you have had or are currently participating in. Include training programs, coaching, mentoring, etc. For each, list the title and the year you completed it.

Training Program	Year Completed
1.	
2.	
3.	

Applicant's Demographic Data (optional)

Gender:

- Woman
- Man
- Prefer Not To Answer

Ethnicity *(you can select more than one option)*

- White
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Native American or American Indian
- Multiracial or Other: _____

Age

- 18-34
- 35-50
- 50-65
- 65+

Letter of Recommendation:

You are required to submit one letter of recommendation as part of your application.

Please identify who will write the letter on your behalf. Your letter of recommendation should be written by a leader in your current organization with direct knowledge of your contributions, work style, and potential. If you are applying for the Executive Leader level, your letter should be written by your organization's Board Chair. **Your letter of recommendation must be submitted by February 23, 2018 at midnight Eastern Standard Time. Please advise the author of your letter of recommendation to submit the letter via email to Leadership@ofn.org with "Recommendation for: first and last name of applicant" in the subject line.**

The Letter of Recommendation should address:

- The applicant's leadership potential as recognized by the firm's leaders, the applicant's peers, and if applicable, their staff.
- The applicant's ability to both contribute to the program and benefit from participation in the program.
- The organization's commitment to and support of the applicant in 2018 to participate fully in the program and to bring back an intensive and introspective approach to organizational change for equitable impact.

Author of Letter of Recommendation: _____

Title: _____ Email: _____ Phone: _____

Essay Questions – Submit both essay questions in ONE document. Include your first and last name on each page. The file name for your document should follow this format: FIRST NAME_LAST NAME_essays.

1. The Opportunity Fellows Program supports talent that can facilitate and lead systemic change (i.e., change in practices, norms and values) within their own organizations with the goal of ensuring equitable investment in underserved and disenfranchised communities. What systemic changes do you think are needed at your CDFI or in the CDFI industry? What role would you like to play in creating that change? In what ways do you think the *Opportunity Fellows Program* can help you in that role? **(600 word limit)**
2. Please discuss why facilitating systemic change that promotes greater inclusion of diverse perspectives and equitable investment is important to you as a leader? **(600 word limit)**

Supporting Material

Your Resume: Please attach a resume which includes a description of your current job. **The file name for your resume should follow this format: FIRST NAME_LAST NAME_resume.**

Confirmation

By typing my initials and today's date and submitting this application, I have agreed that all the information I have submitted is current and accurate.

Further, I confirm that, if selected to participate in the Opportunity Fellows Program, I:

- 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 attending the full duration of Program meetings, webinars and calls; completing preparatory or follow-up assignments on time; openly sharing my professional successes, challenges, and failures with the other Fellows; and constructively engaging with the other Fellows throughout the Program.
- Intend to continue working in the opportunity finance industry for two years after completing the program.

Initials

Today's date (mm/dd/yyyy)