

Press release

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Better serving the underserved

BBVA Compass, Opportunity Finance Network welcome first class of Opportunity Fellows to Birmingham

- 25 professionals from diverse finance organizations participate in leadership program
- Fellows to explore ways to give underserved communities better access to capital

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – BBVA Compass and Opportunity Finance Network on Tuesday welcome their inaugural class of 25 Opportunity Fellows to Birmingham for a three-day training session where they'll explore how to lead the change necessary to give underserved communities equal access to capital.

BBVA Compass and Opportunity Finance Network joined forces in October to develop the Opportunity Fellows Program. The program is designed to boost the leadership ranks and spur the transformation of Community Development Financial Institutions, or CDFIs, which are critical engines of opportunity in low-income communities. Nationally recognized experts in the field of community development chose the 25 Opportunity Fellows from nearly 100 highly qualified applicants, and together they represent emerging, mid-career and executive-level professionals from CDFIs across the country.

“This innovative and robust leadership program brings together participants with different levels of experience with a common goal: to increase opportunity for all people and in all communities across the country,” said Pam Porter, Executive Vice President, Strategic Consulting at OFN. “We congratulate the 25 Opportunity Fellows, and we thank BBVA Compass for recognizing the impact this program will have and for its generous support.”

The Opportunity Fellows Program provides nine months of training with world-class experts in leadership and racial equity from the University of Alabama at Birmingham’s Collat School of Business and Race Matters Institute.

“Our educators are excited to provide leadership and racial equity training through this enormously valuable program,” said Eric P. Jack, dean of UAB's Collat School of Business. “Understanding the patterns of economic disadvantage among racial and ethnic minorities is a crucial first step to providing more opportunities to underserved communities, and we are proud to lend our expertise in this area.”

The program kicks off this week at the BBVA Compass headquarters in Birmingham, where participants will engage in interactive activities and experiences, and will learn from other leaders in microfinance. In addition to spending time with experts to better understand the patterns and causes behind the growing inequity in racial and ethnic minorities, the Opportunity Fellows also will tour the Innovation Depot business incubator.

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“We could not be more proud of this leadership program, and of these participants,” said BBVA Compass Director of Corporate Responsibility and Reputation Reymundo Ocañas. “We know that by investing in their future, we’re investing in the future of all of our communities. These are the leaders of organizations who put capital to work directly in low- to moderate-income communities. The idea is to arm them with the tools and skills they need to flourish in this impactful field of community-oriented finance.”

The Opportunity Fellows Program inaugural class participants are:

Executive Leaders

- Thelma Adams Johnson, ACT! Albany Community Together Inc., Albany, GA
- Rex Fowler, Hartford Community Loan Fund, Hartford, CT
- Greg Maher, Leviticus 25:23 Alternative Fund, Inc., Tarrytown, NY
- Mary Ellen Judah, North Alabama Revolving Loan Fund, Huntsville, AL
- Mary Jo Cook, Pacific Community Ventures, San Francisco, CA
- Harold Pettigrew, Washington Area Community Investment Fund (Wacif), Washington, DC
- Wendy Baumann, Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation, Milwaukee, WI

Mid-Career Leaders

- Raquel Valdez, BCL of Texas, Austin, TX
- Melinda Clemons, Capital Impact Partners, Detroit, MI
- Norma Hernandez, Craft3, Ilwaco, WA
- Justin Chen, Enterprise Community Loan Fund, San Francisco, CA
- Oswaldo Acosta, Latino Economic Development Center, Washington, DC
- Lisa Riley, LiftFund, Birmingham, AL
- Nadine Atieh, Low Income Investment Fund, San Francisco, CA
- Tastonga Davis, Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon, Portland, OR
- Alex Dang, Opportunity Fund, San Jose, CA
- Roman Ruiz, Self-Help Federal Credit Union, Chicago, IL

Emerging Leaders

- Jennifer Angarita, Boston Community Capital, Boston, MA
- Heather Rademacher Taylor, First Nations Oweesta Corporation, Longmont, CO
- Matthew Singh, Low Income Investment Fund, New York, NY
- Adam Kopp, Mercy Loan Fund, Denver, CO
- Grant Bennett, PeopleFund, Austin, TX
- Maggie Parker, The Real Estate Council Community Fund, Dallas, TX
- Brittany Bennett, Self-Help, Durham, NC
- Roberto Antonio Hernandez, Working Solutions, San Francisco, CA

Selection committee members included:

- Donna Gambrell, former director of the CDFI Fund

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- Carl Crosby, EVP of Talent and Culture for BBVA Compass
- Matt Hull, executive director of the Texas Association of CDCs
- Tom Espinoza, president of the Raza Development Fund
- Donna Fabiani, EVP of Opportunity Finance Network

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About BBVA Compass

BBVA Compass is a Sunbelt-based financial institution that operates 672 branches, including 344 in Texas, 89 in Alabama, 75 in Arizona, 62 in California, 45 in Florida, 38 in Colorado and 19 in New Mexico. BBVA Compass ranks among the top 25 largest U.S. commercial banks based on deposit market share and ranks among the largest banks in Alabama (2nd), Texas (4th) and Arizona (5th). BBVA Compass was recently named Best Digital Bank in North America by global finance magazine Euromoney and the best regional bank in the South & West and best mobile app in Money magazine's 2015-2016 list of the Best Banks in America. Additional information about BBVA Compass can be found at bbvacompass.com, by following [@BBVACompassNews](https://twitter.com/BBVACompassNews) on Twitter or visiting newsroom.bbvacompass.com.

About OFN

Opportunity Finance Network (OFN), the leading national network of private financial institutions, creates growth that is good for communities, investors, individuals, and the economy. Members of OFN are community development financial institutions (CDFIs) that deliver responsible lending to help low-wealth and low-income communities join the economic mainstream. Through 2015 OFN's network originated \$48 billion in financing in urban, rural, and Native American communities. This financing has helped to create or maintain more than 1,044,000 jobs, start or expand nearly 191,000 businesses and microenterprises, and support the development or rehabilitation of nearly 1.5 million housing units and 9,800 community facility projects. For more information, visit ofn.org.

Editor's Note:

BBVA Compass is a trade name of Compass Bank.