



Letter from the Executive Director

For the past five years, [FUND Community Institute \(FUND CI\)](#) has conducted and disseminated research on issues and trends in the CDFI industry. The purpose of the organization is to support the industry by contributing research findings to the public discourse. FUND CI's first five years were an eventful period that involved health, racial, and economic issues that seem to necessitate a different type of impact report. While annual reports tend to be about outputs and impact, I want to take a step beyond that and reflect on how FUND CI has shaped our work and the inputs from the industry overall that have made our work possible. We are grateful for feedback from the industry at large, as well as collaborative support from those that have partnered on research, participated in presentations, and joined our advisory boards. Over the past five years, we have furthered our understanding that the "who" included and participating in our research is critically linked to the value and relevance of the findings.

As we move forward with planning our next five years, we will use this information to consider whether our research topics reflected the important issues of the times. If we contributed to the discourse in positive ways? If we took steps to acknowledge and minimize the white supremacy inherent in much of typical research? If our findings were as representative and accurate as possible? We will also use this information to push ourselves to design and conduct research projects that include as many voices as possible.

Some of my personal takeaways from our research findings include:

- The CDFI industry is resilient and played a vital role in PPP lending.
- The industry in general has work to do in instituting policies and procedures that result in meaningful change to make DEI a reality.
- Outside of the industry, there are factors such as credit scores that institutionalize gender discrimination, racism, etc. that affect the CDFI industry and limit impact.

I am excited about the next five years for FUND CI and potential research into green lending, effectiveness of development services, how to address staffing and marketing issues across the industry, the effects of higher interest rates on CDFI lending, etc. I also look forward to the new partnerships we will develop and seeing the impacts of ECIP, RRP, and ERP. Please reach out if you have a research idea or a proposed partnership. We would love to work together!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ruth E. Barber".

Ruth Barber
Executive Director

About FUND CI

[FUND Community Institute \(FUND CI\)](#) is a nonprofit think tank founded in March 2017 conducting independent studies, partner projects and commissioned research designed to encourage dialogue, share best practices, and promote innovation. FUND CI is a thought leader in the FUND Family of organizations, complementing the work of [FUND Consulting](#), a women owned consulting firm serving CDFIs and mission driven organizations since 2000.

The mission of FUND CI is to build thriving communities through research, training, and facilitation of opportunities for knowledge sharing.

Reflecting on the Research Thus Far

FUND CI strives to conduct research that is relevant to the CDFI Industry, and over the past five years has tackled topics such as the role of gender in the CDFI industry; diversity, equity and inclusion; and how CDFIs have responded to the Covid pandemic. We invite you to revisit our past reports through linked reports and highlights.

FUND CI Publications

[CDFI Advisory Boards: Going Beyond Accountability \(2018\)](#)

42% of CDFIs have advisory boards; of which 70% were formed to meet CDFI Certification requirements. The majority of advisory boards play a role in developing new products and partnerships; and 40% source deals.

[Perception versus Reality: Women and Change in the CDFI Industry \(2018\)](#)

Women are involved in all roles and have positive experiences in the CDFI industry but also seem to have accepted institutional bias and gender inequity as the norms in the workplace.

[Advancing Equity: Diversity and Inclusion at CDFIs \(2019\)](#)

There is a core belief and commitment to DEI issues in the industry however these values and beliefs are not yet codified into formal policies or procedures. What is needed are advancements such as dedicated staff, formalized policies, and increased representation of all voices in decision-making roles.

[Bending Toward Justice: Credit Scores as a Measure of CDFI Impact \(2020\)](#)

Small dollar credit builder loans are beneficial to communities and result in increased credit scores for participants. Despite the fact that they are not profitable, CDFIs remain committed to providing them for mission reasons.

[Gender at Native CDFIs \(2020\)](#)

The matrilineal culture present in many Native communities helps bolster the role of women in NCDFIs, however women still find multiple challenges related to gender in their respective organizations.

[CDFI Loan Funds Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Two Spotlights \(2021\)](#)

CDFI Loan Funds showed incredible expediency and responsiveness in reacting to the pandemic. They placed a priority on speed of response in terms of adopting policies to help current borrowers, developing and launching new emergency lending products, and leveraging capital from other public and private sources to maximize impact.

[Investing in the Future of Women \(2021\)](#)

There are structural barriers that limit women's access to credit. A higher proportion of small business owners rely on personal credit to grow and support their businesses. Given women's, and particularly women of colors', lower incomes compared to men, this can limit the financial bases of their business.

[Credit Access for Women Owned Small Business Research Brief \(2021\)](#)

Wisdom Fund cohort data showed that 38% of all loans, by both number and dollar value, were to female borrowers.

[FUND CI Spotlight: Succession Planning \(2022\)](#)

The industry appear underprepared for leadership shifts with less than 50% of CDFIs currently having formal succession plans.