

Meeting Women Small Business Clients' Technical Assistance Needs

A GENDER BASED ANALYSIS OF SMALL BUSINESS
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND CDFIS' RESPONSES



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Introduction

Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) are important vehicles for delivering capital to geographies and populations that have historically been limited in their ability to access credit. Alongside credit, CDFIs provide technical assistance to prepare borrowers for successful loan outcomes as well as to increase knowledge and capacity. Within this general model, CDFIs must craft strategies which fit the needs of the populations they focus on as well as larger socio-economic context in which they operate. There are opportunities to interrogate and explore the choices that they make in order to identify best practices, areas for improvement etc.

For this research, FUND CI focused on small business-focused CDFIs and how they craft strategies related to their technical assistance programs, including exploring if gender plays a role in technical assistance provision or success.

Research demonstrates that disparities persist between women and men in terms of financial acumen and financial well-being due to a litany of historic and ongoing causes, such as a historic exclusion from access to credit and lower average lifetime earnings for women. The Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia's 2020 report "Gender Disparities in Financial Well-Being¹" provides an excellent analysis of the differences and the challenges more often faced by women. For example, women are less likely to be fully banked and are more likely to access an alternative lender; women are more likely to be denied credit and are less confident in apply for credit cards; women are less comfortable with retirement and other long-term financial planning, etc. The report also goes into detail on how women have lower financial literacy than men. There is also substantial research identifying historic factors which have contributed to the current state, such as women's lower lifetime earning than men, differing familial responsibilities, historic exclusion from accessing credit, among others.

The Federal Reserve Bank research as well as others, identify that gender may play a role in how potential borrowers interact with CDFIs. How CDFIs respond to these differences was the impetus for this research with the goal of informing practitioners and providing data to improve CDFIs technical assistance programs. To do so, FUND CI identified the following research questions:

¹ Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. (2020). (rep.). *Gender Disparities in Financial Well-Being from the Survey of Household Economics and Decisionmaking*. Retrieved March 2024, from <https://www.philadelphiafed.org/-/media/FRBP/Assets/Community-Development/Reports/gender-disparities-in-financial-well-being-survey-of-household-economics-and-decisionmaking.pdf>.

- 1) How do CDFIs respond to meet the technical assistance needs of women borrowers to better access small business credit products?
- 2) What tactics do CDFIs use to identify needed technical assistance topics? I.e., assessments, self-selections, required programming etc.
- 3) Do women access CDFI small business lending at different rates than men? What trends can be identified from the data?
- 4) What can be learned about technical assistance programs from CDFIs with a high rate of women small business borrowers?

Methodology Overview: To answer these questions, FUND CI utilized a mixed method approach. First, an advisory board was assembled to provide additional expertise on the operations of small business-focused CDFIs, as well as on research design. Second, FUND CI undertook a survey to begin to explore the research questions and to create a landscape analysis of technical assistance programs. Third, interviews were conducted to add depth to themes that arose from the survey as well as to further explore the role of gender in technical assistance. Fourth, data was collected from a small sample of CDFIs to explore the relationship between technical assistance provision and loan outcomes. Finally, FUND CI collected five case studies of exemplary small business-focused CDFIs. The case study highlights the CDFIs technical assistance programming and innovative factors.

Key findings from the overall research follow the introduction.

Each chapter provides in depth information on analysis completed in each phase and themes related to the research questions.

Concentrating on Small Business-Focused CDFIs: This work focuses on CDFIs that provide small business loans, as defined by the organization itself. Given the diversity of models within the CDFI industry, FUND CI undertook a focus on one type of lender with the goal of identifying similarities between the technical assistance that they provide. Small business lenders were selected in part because they are a large part of the CDFI industry. The *OFN Side-by-Side Chartbook: Fiscal Year 2022 Member Data Analysis* documents that of OFN's 262 reporting members, there are 32 microlenders and 91 small business lenders, i.e. 47% of the membership. Additionally, small business financing, particularly for newer and smaller revenue firms, can be an intersection between personal finance and business, therefore closely tied to larger themes of credit access for women. For example, the 2023 Report on Employer Firms from the Federal Reserve Banks found that 74% of women

owned firms utilize their owner's personal savings or access funds from family members (compared to 64% of men).

While there was a focus, FUND CI anticipates that some themes will resonate for CDFIs with other loan focuses, such as how to evolve technical assistance programs in the light of funding shifts and new technological solutions.

Defining Technical Assistance: A definition of technical assistance was not provided to participants during the data collection phases. The intent was to allow for unrestricted discussion and for participants to fully discuss technical assistance based on their organization's operating practices. For many organizations, technical assistance likely intersects with Development Services, as defined by the CDFI Fund. However, Development Services carries a formal definition that not all technical assistance practices will meet. As such, each organization should review its own programming in regard to the Development Services definition for CDFI Certification purposes.

FUND CI wishes to acknowledge that this work references a gender binary of male and female which does not reflect the lived experience of many individuals. This is due to data availability as most CDFIs collect data based on two gender fields and a general "other" style option that often lacks nuance.

Key Findings

High level findings from the project and where to learn more about each findings follows:

- Survey respondents did not think that gender plays a role in what technical assistance is needed or provided to recipients. However, when asked about the gender breakdown of technical assistance recipients compared to loan clients, survey respondents reported a disparity with a greater proportion of women receiving technical assistance compared to loans. Learn more about this finding in Chapter 1.
- CDFI staff identified that individual needs, such as the borrower’s financial acumen, business strengths or weaknesses, and the phase of the business played more of a role than gender in determining what technical assistance is provided. Interviewees shared anecdotes and impressions on how women and men may access technical assistance differently. Learn more about this finding in Chapter 2.
- Creating trust and building relationships with technical assistance recipients emerged as a theme for successful technical assistance programs. Learn more about this finding in Chapter 2.
- Prior to this work, there was limited research on the state of small business-focused CDFIs’ technical assistance programs. Through the landscape analysis, baseline information about what content is commonly provided, what formats are used, how technical assistance is determined, etc. was identified. Learn more about the landscape analysis in Chapter 1.
- The nature of technical assistance is evolving as CDFIs consider technology changes such as integrating AI, updating tracking systems, or using centralized platforms to deliver and track their technical assistance. Learn more about this finding in Chapter 2.
- CDFIs are innovating their technical assistance programs to better meet the needs of all recipients, regardless of gender. Read Chapter 4 to learn about innovations from Allies for Community Business, Alternatives Federal Credit Union, Metropolitan Economic Development Association, Northern Initiatives, and Partner Community Capital.

Chapter 1: Survey Results and Technical Assistance Landscape Analysis

The project began with a survey to explore the research questions and to better understand common technical assistance practices. Prior to this project, there were limited centralized sources of information on how CDFIs typically conduct technical assistance. Without an understanding of what is currently done, it is not possible to identify what practices may be innovative or exemplary to inform other CDFIs. Thus, the survey effort also creates a baseline understanding of technical assistance practices amongst small business focused CDFIs.

The survey was conducted between April and August 2025. The survey was distributed via multiple list serves, social media posts, newsletters, and through direct outreach to CDFIs.

Ultimately, 87 survey responses were received. Respondents were predominantly CDFIs (84.9%) that provide financial products to small businesses (71.6%). Respondents were screened for providing technical assistance – any that indicated that they did not provide technical assistance were excluded from the survey. Organizational data was collected from surveyed organizations. Respondents had a broad range of asset sizes, though the largest group of respondents fell within the \$10MM to \$25MM asset size (23.3%). Most respondents reported a geographic focus that is a mix of urban and rural (43.2%) followed by 40.9% serving an urban geography and 15.9% serve a primarily rural geography. Respondents tend to operate within a regional footprint such as serving several counties (40.9%) though may service statewide (25.0%), local (13.6%), or multi-state (15.9%) footprints.

Survey responses by question are provided in Appendix A with additional detail. Themes from the survey are reviewed below.

What Technical Assistance Do Small Business CDFIs Commonly Provide?

Small business-focused CDFIs cover a broad range of content areas through their technical assistance programs and typically provide multiple content areas. The most common content area was financial management or cash flow analysis, provided by 87.3% of respondents. While other areas were less common, no content area was provided by less than two thirds of respondents suggesting all content areas are frequently provided. The table below details the content areas covered by respondents.

Does your organization provide technical assistance related to...	Respondents that selected a format for this content area
Financial management or cash flow analysis	87.3%
Business planning	83.9%
Other content	76.2%
Credit counseling	72.7%
Marketing, including traditional sources and online platforms	70.4%
Operations, such as accounting, software, etc.	66.7%

The survey asked about five subject areas: financial management or cash flow analysis; business planning; credit counseling; marketing, including traditional sources and online platforms; operations, such as accounting, software, etc. Given that more than three quarters (76.2%) also selected that they provide technical assistance in other content areas beyond those already identified, there is likely even greater variety to programming than captured within the survey.

What Delivery Methods are Used to Provide Technical Assistance?

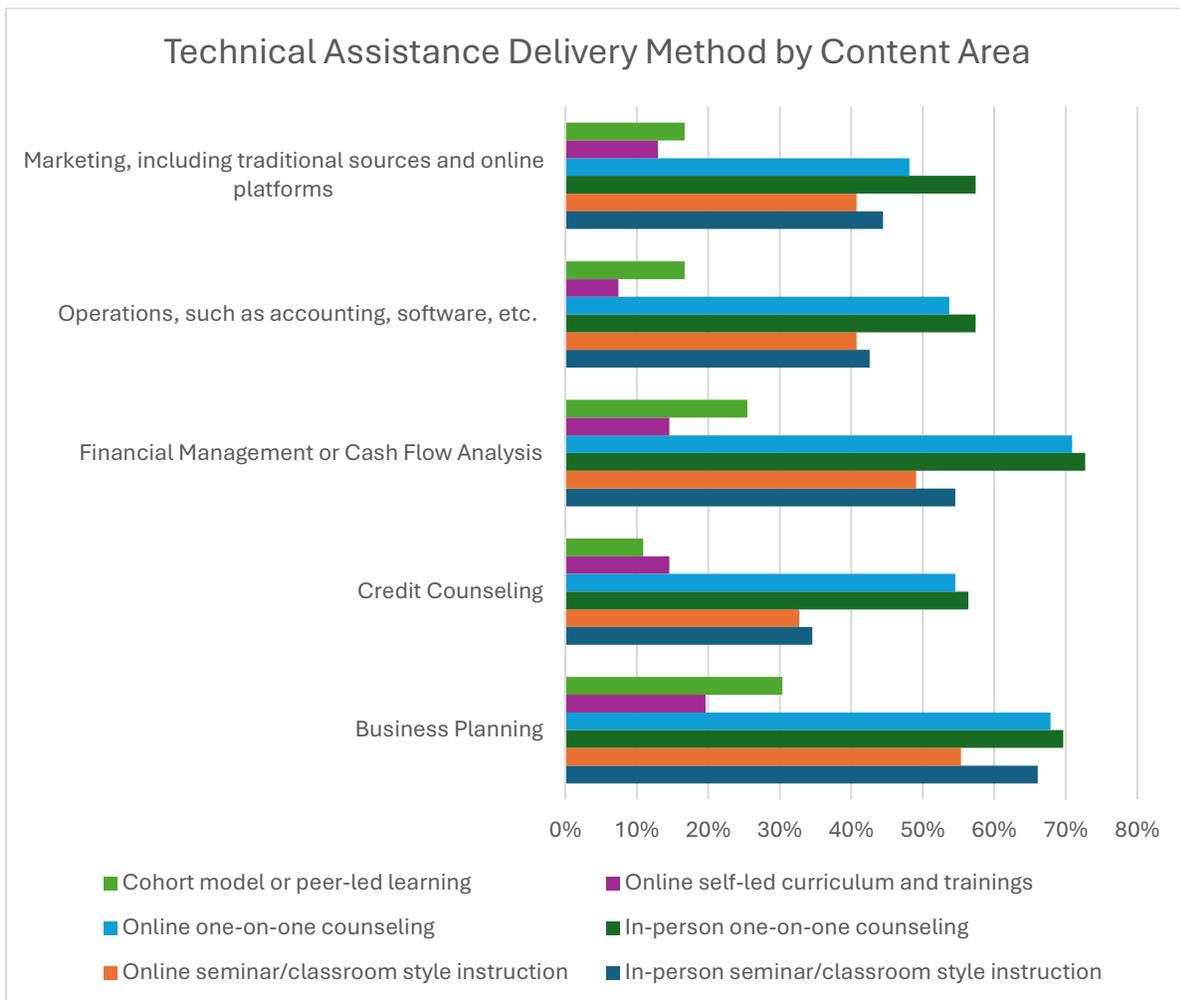
Small business-focused CDFIs provide technical assistance through a variety of delivery methods. Respondents most commonly provide in-person formats, though online formats were only slightly less common.

When asked about content type, survey respondents were asked to identify which delivery method was used, from the following options: in-person seminar/classroom style instruction; online seminar/classroom style instruction; in-person one-on-one counseling; online one-on-one counseling; online self-led curriculum and trainings; cohort model or peer-led learning; or other.

A one-on-one approach is the most common approach across each content area. In-person one-on-one counseling was the most common delivery method in all areas, with online one-on-one counseling the second most common delivery method across the board. This highlights CDFIs' commitment to personalized and customized service to their clients.

Seminar or classroom style instruction generally was the next most common type of technical assistance across content areas with a similar pattern of in-person instruction being more common but online instruction being popular as well.

Cohort and peer-led learning is utilized across several of the subject areas, including business planning (30.4%), financial management or cash flow analysis (25.5%) and less commonly for operations (16.7%), marketing (16.7%) or credit counseling (10.9%). Online, self-led training is used by some respondents across subject areas though at a lower rate than other delivery methods.



For most CDFIs, technical assistance is primarily provided by staff (94.6%). For many, staff are supported by contractors (52.7%) or external providers (43.6%).

How is Technical Assistance Determined?

The client plays a significant role in selecting what technical assistance is provided, either by self-selecting content or by participating in an assessment process with CDFI staff.

As detailed below, the most common way of assessing what technical assistance will be provided is by client self-selection with 32.7% of respondents using this as their most common method. In 44.9% of cases, the CDFI staff completes an assessment and either suggests or assigns technical assistance. It is uncommon for technical assistance to be a blanket requirement – this was selected as the most common way of determining technical assistance by just 2.0% of respondents.

Understanding how CDFIs identify what technical assistance a client receives helps to answer one of the project’s research questions:

What tactics do CDFIs use to identify needed technical assistance topics? I.e., assessments, self-selections, required programming etc.?

Most Common Method for Determining Technical Assistance	Percent
Recipient self-selects content	32.7%
Staff completes an assessment of business needs and suggests technical assistance	30.6%
Staff complete an assessment of business needs and assigns required technical assistance	14.3%
Recipient completes a self-assessment of business needs and completes identified technical assistance	12.2%
Other (please specify)	8.2%
All potential borrowers are required to complete the same technical assistance	2.0%

Typically, small business-focused CDFIs view their technical assistance programming as responsive and tailored to client needs. When asked to rank their agreement with that viewpoint, respondents' average answer was 72.8, indicating high levels of agreement with the statement that the organization's technical assistance is responsive and tailored to client's needs.

Respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that gender helps to identify what technical assistance is needed, instead highlighting how the client's financial acumen helps to inform what is provided.

Technical assistance programs are not consistently formalized amongst respondents. On a scale of 0 (strong disagreement) to 100 (strong agreement), when asked their agreement with the statement, "My organization's technical assistance programming is formalized with firm guidelines on which offerings recipients receive", the average response was 51.1 suggesting neutrality on whether technical assistance was formalized. Nonetheless, there were multiple responses at either end of the spectrum. Seven respondents gave scores of less than ten, suggesting they strongly disagreed that their technical assistance programming is formalized. Eight respondents scored 90 or above, suggesting they strongly agree that their technical assistance programming is formalized.

Does Gender Factor into Technical Assistance?

On average, respondents did not feel that gender plays a role in what technical assistance was needed. However, when asked about the gender breakdown of technical assistance recipients compared to loan clients, they identified a disparity based on gender with more women receiving technical assistance compared to loans.

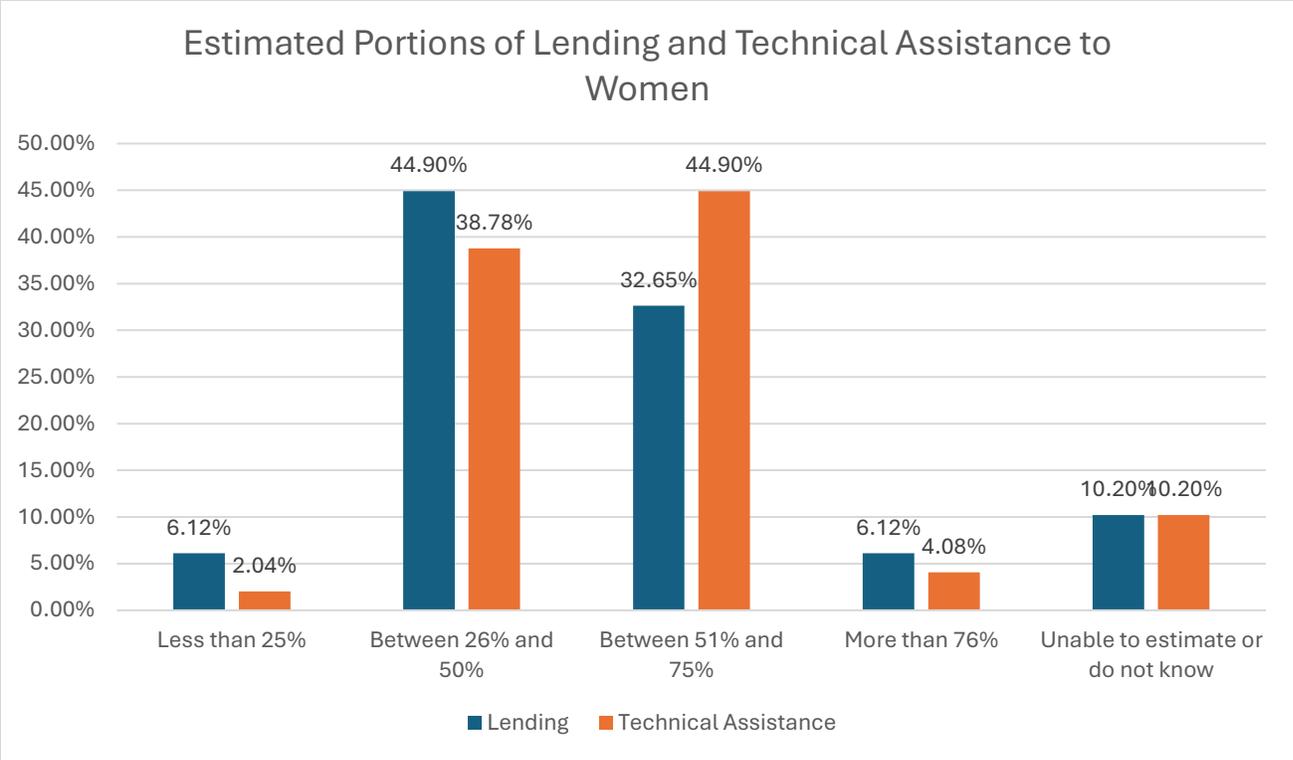
Survey takers were asked their level of agreement with the following statement: "The recipient's gender helps us to identify what technical assistance might be needed". A response of 0 indicated strong disagreement and 100 indicated strong agreement with the statement. Overall, respondents generally disagreed with the statement that the recipient's gender helps to identify what technical assistance might be needed with an average answer of 18.9. The median response was 5, indicating greater disagreement with the statement for most respondents.

Respondents were given the opportunity to describe how gender helps identify what technical assistance is needed in an open-ended response. As noted above, most respondents did not identify that gender affects what technical assistance may be needed and that was reiterated in the open responses. When gender was identified as a potential

influence, it was related to identifying other programs or grants that may be able to support the business or in recognition that gender may create additional barriers that are less likely to affect men that are nonetheless evaluated separately. A sample of responses is provided:

- “Gender doesn't play a conscious role.”
- “Technical assistance is gender neutral, but often times our first-time borrowers are women who have little to no business experience. The TA given is addressing the acumen in all cases, regardless of gender.”
- “Women often face different barriers than men, e.g. lack of access to childcare. We take all of that into account on an individual basis.”
- “Gender typically doesn't come into play - except when a business owner is eligible for a grant or additional services typically geared toward women owned businesses and women entrepreneurs, because based on data, women are less likely to be entrepreneurs and are less likely to be eligible/receive traditional financing.”

There is a mismatch between the rates of technical assistance and lending to women with a higher proportion of women receiving technical assistance compared to loans . When asked what portion of their technical assistance was provided to women, respondents most commonly responded that 51%-75% of their technical assistance recipients went to women (44.9%). However, when similarly asked to estimate what portion of their lending went to women, they most commonly selected the between 26% and 50% category (44.9%).



There are many potential implications and causes of this mismatch, and it is an area for future research. Themes arose during the interview portion of the project which helped to frame this finding:

- Receiving a loan is not the only successful outcome for technical assistance. For some recipients, technical assistance may identify that capital is not needed at that time or that taking on debt would be detrimental to the client’s personal and/or business financials. Other clients may be referred to a different lender throughout the technical assistance process. This complicates the data collection process and comparison opportunities for clients of all genders.
- Some interviewees noted that the person receiving technical assistance may not ultimately be the person who takes out the loan. For example, in a co-owned, “mom and pop” business, several shared anecdotes of the women in the relationship attending technical assistance classes though the loan was ultimately in the name of the man.

Additionally, there are other nuances to the technical assistance and lending relationship not fully explored within this report, such as loan application rates, loan approval rates, differentiating trends based on pre-loan and post-loan technical assistance, etc. See Chapter 5 for additional areas of future research.

Chapter 2: Exploring the Role of Gender and Other Technical Assistance Themes Through Interviews

Introduction

For the second phase of the research, FUND CI conducted interviews to collect additional details on small business-focused CDFIs' technical assistance programming and to continue to explore the research questions. The interview format allowed for more in-depth explorations around themes that were identified in the survey as detailed above.

Interviews followed a set list of questions, which is provided in **Appendix B**. FUND CI conducted 17 interviews with 16 CDFIs between June and August 2025. Each of the interviews was with a staff member of small business-focused CDFI that provides technical assistance. The key findings here are based on those interviews and are intended to be illustrative for the larger industry.

Generally, the CDFIs interviewed use the business stage and sector as the primary differentiator for how technical assistance is accessed, rather than gender. Many of the CDFIs interviewed pointed towards building trust and a personal relationship with their clients as a key to successful technical assistance for their organization. This included building a strong reputation for the organization, building a relationship with the recipient that was based on cooperation and respect, and proactivity offering technical assistance. Most did not highlight different strategies for women beyond catering to their needs and building out their trust.

Interviewees shared anecdotes and impressions on how women and men may access technical assistance differently, including the women often access technical assistance sooner in the business process, are more willing to accept help and share personal challenges, etc. Interviewees pointed to the business stage and sector as a primary differentiator for what technical assistance might be needed, in addition to the client's individual financial acumen.

CDFIs use the borrowers' financial acumen, business strengths and weaknesses as well as business stage and sector as the primary differentiator for how credit is accessed, rather than gender.

Interviewees also pointed to building trust and a personal relationship with their clients as a key to successful technical assistance for their organization.

Interviewees also reflected on the future of their technical assistance programs. CDFIs have sought and continue to seek ways to increase efficiency, whether through updates to delivery methods, reframing the level of connection, and exploring AI. Many CDFIs expect to continue to evolve their applications of technology in providing technical assistance, including adopting AI strategies. Many CDFIs now use technology throughout their technical assistance programming, beginning at intake and initial assessment, continuing through delivery.

Question-Level Interview Detail

Are there ways that your technical assistance programming has changed within the last three to five years?

Several interviewees spoke of ways that they have updated their offerings to better tie technical assistance programming to their CDFI's other functions, particularly lending. For some, this meant drawing a more direct connection to the outcomes technical assistance has on lending such as lowering the delinquency rate and maintaining the CDFI's relationship with the borrower. One interviewee noted that they "Need to tie ourselves into [the lending] process to show the value" of the technical assistance programming.

Many interviewees mentioned that their delivery methods had been updated or were in the process of being updated. One primary update was a shift towards virtual programming in the aftermath of Covid. Virtual programming has now become a standard part of organizations' offerings, allowing them to expand their reach and for technical assistance recipients to work through content at their own pace. In the aftermath of the pandemic, several interviewees noted that their content has changed to include how to build an online presence, how to conduct e-commerce marketing, etc. Several others have recently implemented applications, such as Initiate, to enhance their technical assistance delivery and data collections.

Funding shifts have affected how technical assistance is structured, with several CDFIs noting that they have moved more of their technical assistance to internal programming rather than external cohorts. Others have expanded their reach through cohort models, reaching more individuals at once when compared to one-on-one coaching. Several noted that they are in initial stages of exploring AI to create efficiencies in their programming, particularly in the face of recent funding cuts.

What do you expect technical assistance to look like in the next five years? What additional advancements do you hope to make?

Several CDFIs noted their plans to deepen their relationships with borrowers. One noted, “Our main goal is being able to build on something that we already know. We are working on building strong relationships with the borrowers so that they come to us with questions, to get guidance.” One interviewee stressed the importance of relationships and meeting the technical assistance recipient where they were at, rather than making them fill out forms and ask for assistance. Another noted that building a relationship was a strategy to help shift the timing of technical assistance so that clients sought help sooner.

Interviewees generally anticipated that technology would continue to play a growing role in their technical assistance programs, through updated delivery systems and/or adopting AI. Some had concerns that adopting AI would reduce the personal touch that CDFIs can provide but noted that reducing human capital needs could be a way to continue or expand programming in the face of budgetary restrictions. Several interviewees noted that recent technology adoptions will lead to additional data collection, which in turn will likely lead to program updates.

Several noted that the organization was reconsidering how their technical assistance was structured to respond to funding changes. For example, one noted they are seeking to determine which clients need one-on-one assistance, and which might succeed in a group training model to expand the reach of its providers.

Can you please describe the process for how technical assistance offerings are determined for potential recipients? When does this determination take place? For example, is there an initial assessment, check ins at certain stages of the relationship etc.?

The process of determining what technical assistance is offered varies among interviewees, ranging from formal assessments to conversations with the potential recipient to a determination by the loan officer or other staff member. One noted how the client found their CDFI was also an indicator of what level of support may be needed – they found that clients coming to the CDFI through a referral partner may have a more established business than those that contacted the CDFI through their website.

Many recipients stressed the importance of developing a relationship with the client. One interviewee noted, “You are giving the person the self-selection opportunity, but then as the

technical assistance provider you have to fully listen to them and understand where you want to point the compass to reach the best of the possibility.”

Several utilize formal assessment tools to guide the process. For some, the assessments are administered at intake and at regular intervals to evaluate business growth and to determine if different technical assistance may be beneficial. One noted that ongoing reassessment can be beneficial as not all clients learn at the same pace or in the same way so it can help to customize the technical assistance.

Most interviewees mentioned that technical assistance needs were reassessed throughout the relationship. For some, this came through formalized assessment tools as noted above. For others, updates to the technical assistance provided came through conversations between the client and their primary contact with the organization.

Are there ways that technology is used to assess, track or provide technical assistance? If so, please describe.

Some CDFIs have systems for tracking technical assistance that involve multiple applications. For example, one explained that they track technical assistance in their loan system, utilize electronic surveys after each workshop, and feed collected information back into a database to track business’s stages to help inform the technical assistance that will be offered. Other tracking platforms included a Salesforce environment, webforms, or a CRM application.

Several interviewed CDFIs use Initiate, a technical assistance platform established by Northern Initiatives. This platform directly provides technical assistance and tracks various metrics, such as training completed, and time spent on training, as well as providing assessments along the way.

For delivery, many interviewees noted that they utilize Zoom or other online meeting platforms to provide virtual training, leverage business planning software, and other free online tools. A small number of interviewees noted that their use of technology was limited. One noted that they limited the use of technology in delivery to keep things more flexible to the customer’s needs. Another noted that funding challenges had limited their ability to build out technological solutions.

Can you please describe your CDFIs process for tracking technical assistance?

- **Does your current process meet your needs or is there additional data you would like to track?**
- **Do you use the data to update or change your technical assistance or other offerings?**

What is tracked varies between CDFIs and typically includes a combination of the following elements: the number of hours provided, topics covered, number of participants for group sessions, feedback collected through surveys, and business outcomes. Several interviewees also noted they track demographics of recipients and business information such as industry, business stage, and other indicators. One CDFI described that they have a monthly tracking process, which compiles data across departments and is rolled into a dashboard. They noted that this has been a long-term effort that continues to evolve and advise that others “not let perfect be the enemy of good”.

For those using a technology platform to provide technical assistance, tracking was built into the platform and includes what topics are covered, time spent on the application, etc.

Several respondents noted that while their current processes meet their needs, they recognize that there is additional data that would capture outcomes or impacts in a more comprehensive way. They also noted that they are concerned with too much data collection and burdening the technical assistance recipient. One respondent noted they are trying to establish a better solution for tracking as they anticipate they are severely underestimating the number of hours the team is spending on technical assistance.

Does your CDFI have a focus on serving women, through products, services etc.?

CDFIs interviewed were divided between having an explicit focus on women or not. Several noted that the serving women was part of the mission of the CDFI and one interviewee has a women’s business center with specific women-focused programming. Others identified women as a category of borrowers that has had added challenges in accessing capital, such as one respondent who shared: “Yes, because we have identified that there are certain classes of individuals in the United States who've historically been excluded from access to capital, and those are women, persons of minority heritage and veterans.”

For others, the focus on women was not as explicit – many shared that women were commonly clients or that they served a wide range of populations – but did not have specific programming related to women. One interviewee noted for example, “the majority of the entrepreneurs that we serve are female, but I wouldn't say that we have a focus on that as opposed to helping anybody else.”

Do women access your technical assistance in different ways than men? Additional prompt: This may include how frequently they access it, trends in programming, etc. If yes, what factors do you think influence this?

Some interviewees shared anecdotes and impressions of how women might be different from men in how they are accessing technical assistance. As an important note, these responses were impressions at the time of the interview and were not based on tracking of technical assistance. Some themes included:

- Women tend to access technical assistance earlier in the process of starting their business and tend to come forward sooner when they need assistance.
- Women are more likely to make comments and add to the discussion in group classes as they may feel more comfortable sharing their personal experiences and struggles.
- Women tend to come when they have a more fleshed out idea, men at the beginning stages looking for greater assistance.

Several noted that differences may not be because of gender but rather based on business types. There tended to be business differences based on gender, with more women starting beauty or food businesses compared to construction businesses for example and the different capital needs of the businesses influenced technical assistance needs.

Others did not see a difference in how technical assistance is accessed at all. For example, one interviewee noted that they, “see similar needs based on gender, such as need to update the financial documents, work through cash flow etc.”

How does your CDFI identify or otherwise reach potential technical assistance recipients?

- **Do you use different strategies to reach women?**
- **If so, do you feel those strategies have been successful?**

Most interviewees noted that reputation and trust is the primary way of getting people in the door and engaged for all clients and is particularly true for female borrowers. Several highlighted the importance of word of mouth from past clients and others noted participating in community events to help to create awareness of programming.

Most noted that they did not have a specific marketing or outreach strategy for women. If they did, it included connecting with other groups that specifically served women and posting in social media groups that are targeted to women.

Other strategies that were highlighted as a way to bring in women were connecting people based on industries, promoting women's success stories on their website, and hosting women specific networking opportunities.

For a small group of the CDFIs interviewed, technical assistance was focused on current borrowers rather than a public facing program for interested entrepreneurs. For these, the source of technical assistance recipients was the loan department.

What are the most successful strategies your organization uses when providing technical assistance? Have there been different strategies when offering technical assistance to women?

Many of the CDFIs interviewed pointed towards building trust and a personal relationship with their clients as a key to success for their organization. Most did not highlight different strategies for women beyond catering to their needs and building out their trust. One CDFI summarized this by saying: "Not to be too technical, right? To connect on a human level, to meet people where they are.... You know, we have some of those, but to establish rapport requires seeing them, hearing them, meeting them where they are, respecting". This interviewee noted no particular strategies for women, outside of reaching them on a human level.

Other strategies that were shared include:

- Utilizing blended models that pair coaching and access to resources that are customized to the recipient's needs.
- Tracking business growth overview and tailoring their technical assistance approach to meet those changing needs.
- Hiring in geographies where they would like to establish a greater presence in order to establish trust while also building out a technical assistance and lending presence. This CDFI noted that this strategy has been particularly helpful in reaching women clients, given that they have tend to be more cautious than their male clients and building trust in a relationship is particularly important.
- Trying to keep clients engaged with technical assistance post loan, whether it is through the organization directly or through a local small business development

center. Several CDFIs pointed to ongoing technical assistance as a way to intervene with borrowers should problems arise with the loan or the business.

Do women access your credit or loan products in different ways than men? Additional prompt: This may include how frequency, funding request, type of product etc. If yes, what factors do you think influence this?

Generally, interviewees pointed to business need as the primary driver of differences in how credit or loan products are accessed. For example, one noted that they see trends in loan size based on the industry of the business, with larger loans for men which is driven by a higher proportion of men being in construction and other industries with higher capital needs. Others noted that the phase of the business is a driver of differences when accessing credit access, i.e. start-up businesses versus more established businesses that may be expanding operations. One interviewee shared that their loans are “really heavily overweighted towards our female entrepreneurs that we serve because those tend to be the loans that are at the earlier end of the journey. And then it flips a little bit when we get to some of the larger loans, but still, you know, roughly 50/50.”

Several noted that they provide more loans to women and it is driven by their focus on providing loans to women and low-income individuals. One interviewee added nuance, noting that while they do not have a 50/50 split based on gender, they do serve a greater proportion of women than the proportion of women business owners in the state overall.

Several interviewees commented that they did not believe there was difference, or if they existed, they were not aware of it. One interviewee noted that their flexible underwriting benefits all equally.

Chapter 3: Measuring and Evaluating Technical Assistance

Understanding what data CDFIs typically collect on their technical assistance activities helps to understand what data can be used to evaluate programs currently and how data collection practices may need to evolve to better track outcomes and measure impacts. As part of the survey, respondents shared how they measure success of their technical assistance programs and what data they collect currently.

As is fitting for this research's focus on small business-focused CDFIs, survey respondents identified a successful technical assistance program as one that helps recipients to achieve positive business outcomes (80.4%) as well as for them to improve the business capacity and knowledge of technical assistance recipients (74.7%). Common metrics were also commonly identified as success measures for a technical assistance program, with 45.7% of respondents linking success to providing technical assistance to a desired number of recipients as well as to certain groups (34.8%). Respondents were also asked about their organization's goals in providing technical assistance and a sampling of responses here highlights the breadth of goals:

- “We emphasize 1:1 mentoring tailored to each client's unique needs and situation. We help clients gain financial literacy, confidence as business owners, and prepare for taking out one of our character-based loans and, eventually, traditional loans.”
- “The same as the goals for our loans: fueling the success of under resourced entrepreneurs. We see as much impact from technical assistance alone as we do from making loans.”
- “The goals of our program are to empower underserved entrepreneurs and small business owners with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to build sustainable and thriving businesses. It aims to increase participants' financial literacy, improve business planning and management capabilities, enhance marketing strategies, and strengthen operational efficiency. Additionally, the program seeks to prepare participants to access financial products and services as appropriate; including but not limited to financial counseling, personal and business accounts, personal and business loans and lines of credit.”
- “Output (hours, services, clients) and outcomes (evidence of positive small business state change over time)”

Small business-focused CDFIs also commonly track data related to their technical assistance programs – 93% reported tracking the number of recipients for example. Demographic data is also commonly collected, such as gender (87.2% of respondents collect this), business type (85.1%), business or borrower location (87.2%), race and/or ethnicity (89.4%), income (72.3%), and age (53.2%).

Tracking is most commonly completed within software such as the organization’s loan software or CRM system (59.1%) or spreadsheet tracking (56.8%). Most organizations track whether the technical assistance recipient goes on to receive a loan from the organization (72.3%), though fewer track how their initial loan request compares to their approved loan amount (36.2%).

FUND CI reached out to CDFIs that had participated in the interview phase to provide data on their technical assistance programs. The intent was to track relationships between the receipt of technical assistance and loan outcomes, such as if a loan was received, the size of loans, or if loans were paid off successfully etc. These relationships would inform the research questions related to whether women access CDFI small business lending at different rates than men.

The survey phase of this research showed that data tracked for technical assistance varies between CDFIs and as such the data request called for CDFIs to provide data in readily available formats. The data request focused on a single year of data.

Across the data returned, the CDFIs provided 425 instances of technical assistance in the previous fiscal year. Of these, 54% were to female recipients and 46% to male. Based on data provided, researchers were not able to link the recipients of technical assistance to loan outcomes. This is in part due to the timing of technical assistance compared to lending – those that provided data focused on pre-loan technical assistance and there was a delay between when technical assistance was provided and when loans would be received such that they fell in two separate years and only a portion of the data was collected.

The research has surfaced several areas for future areas to further answer this question, including:

- How are gender-based lending rates situated in the larger economy? If the underlying geography does not have an even split in business ownership, how should that be considered for small business-focused CDFIs in terms of their goals and outreach efforts, etc.

- What are effects of pre-loan versus post-loan technical assistance? All phases of technical assistance were considered within this project. Different categories of providers emerged – some that provided predominantly pre-loan technical assistance such as business planning and credit counseling, while other provided predominantly post-loan technical assistance. Many others provided a range of both but the different phases of technical assistance likely have an impact on the outcomes. Additionally, the timing of the technical assistance should inform future data collection efforts.

See Chapter 5 for additional areas of future research.

Chapter 4: Case Studies

This chapter utilizes case studies to highlight five CDFIs and key learnings from their technical assistance programs. Case study participants were identified following the initial interview phase of the research as documented in Chapter 2 based on unique or innovative practices and their ability to shed light on how CDFIs meet the technical assistance needs of women small business clients. Additional information was collected from each participant via an additional round of interviews and a review of documentation on technical assistance programs.

Allies for Community Business (A4CB)

A4CB is based in Chicago, IL
Learn more at: <https://a4cb.org/>

A4CB has a mission to provide the capital, coaching, and connections entrepreneurs need to grow great businesses that create jobs and wealth in their communities. A4CB believes that entrepreneurs from any background can start and grow businesses that create generational wealth for their families and communities. The organization prioritizes Black, Hispanic, women, and low-to-moderate income entrepreneurs, who received 91% of A4CB's loans in 2024. In 2024, A4CB provided free coaching and other support services to 1,925 community businesses. Through its food and beverage business incubator The Hatchery, A4CB supported an additional 545 entrepreneurs.

Fund CI spoke to Brad McConnell, A4CB's CEO, to learn more about the organization's business coaching programs.

The A4CB Approach

Throughout the interviews, McConnell stressed that A4CB does not offer technical assistance, but rather business coaching. This nomenclature is one way to emphasize the

Key learnings from A4CB:

A4CB builds a business coaching relationship based on the goals identified by the entrepreneur.

A4CB has established ongoing data collection systems that directly link to client's financial data. This streamlines data collection, allows for earlier interventions, and more precisely tracks impacts.

A4CB prioritizes trust and relationship building with its clients.

relational nature of A4CB's programming – rather than providing pre-determined technical assistance, A4CB's coaches work with the client to identify the entrepreneur's goals for their business and what resources are needed to reach those goals. Each coaching experience begins with a business assessment and an in-depth conversation to flesh out those goals. Entrepreneurs work with a business coach to create a small business road map which sets goals, defines products, sets pricing and creates a customer persona. A4CB services and support are tailored to the business stage and the business owner's particular goals.

A4CB has taken to heart the importance of building trust with their clients. McConnell shared examples of how they cultivate trust that may benefit other CDFIs. First, they build trust by publishing entrepreneur stories in which business owners can find themselves, and to underscore that A4CB has experience in serving others like them. McConnell explains that, “we very much try to make connections in our marketing and storytelling. We overweight towards female entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs of color because we want to make sure that people see themselves in our work.” Second, A4CB strives to be “hyper respectful” of the entrepreneurs' time, by never asking them to do something that the A4CB team can do for them. This includes streamlining the data collection work as much as possible as detailed below.

Aligning Approach with Intent

In 2025, A4CB implemented updates to their coaching platform to improve the user experience and therefore improve coaching outcomes. The organization evaluated their existing user interface and determined that the experience of working with A4CB felt disjointed to clients -- they were working with a coach in one part of the platform and then with a lender in another. McConnell noted that this is a burden and can hinder the coaching process: “We want the customer to know that we are a single team that is serving entrepreneurs in a holistic way across their needs and interests. [Until the update] our technology was fighting against that.”

A4CB has updated the user experience “so we've completely rearchitected the way that the entrepreneur experiences what we're offering. The entrepreneur tells us who they are and what they're trying to achieve, gives us the access to the data that we need over time, and then we offer the services we think they will value rather than requiring the entrepreneur to feel as though they're repeatedly applying for help.”

With the update, A4CB can now connect to clients' bank accounts and tax return information to access data on an ongoing basis. This reduces the burden on the client in providing data and also allows A4CB to more continuously monitor financials to identify

potential support. With ongoing access, business coaches are also able to monitor wealth creation over time. McConnell explains that A4CB will “be able to consume that data and then measure against the baseline of the first day we started working with them, so that we know whether wealth is growing over time.” A4CB knows that they still must significantly improve this entrepreneur experience, but A4CB is on the path towards optimizing this experience.

Alternatives Federal Credit Union (Alternatives)

Alternatives is based in Ithaca, NY
Learn more at <https://www.alternatives.org/>

Alternatives Federal Credit Union (Alternatives) is located in Ithaca, New York, and serves surrounding counties. As a depository institution, Alternatives provides a range of products and services. Alternatives specializes in lending to individuals, organizations, and businesses in under-resourced communities, offering financial education, business coaching, and low-interest rate loans that increase economic potential and help build wealth. By focusing on ability to pay and not credit scores, Alternatives is able to provide safe, affordable loans that help borrowers avoid exploitative predatory lenders.

FUND CI spoke to Bea Nellenback, Development Director at Alternatives for this case study.

Technical Assistance at Alternatives

In 2024, Alternatives provided 445 technical assistance sessions to businesses, in addition to 1,022 financial and housing counseling sessions. Of the businesses that received technical assistance, 78% were owned by racial/ethnic minorities or women. 72% of business loans went to low-income households and communities

Alternatives attracts more women entrepreneurs to their technical assistance program. While they have not examined why this is, Nellenback suggested that the credit union’s stated focus on women as one of their targeted groups likely plays a role. She notes that

Key learnings from Alternatives:

Through ongoing data tracking, monitoring of workflows and adapting to new technology, Alternatives has evolved its technical assistance programs.

Alternatives conceives of small business supports as part of financial wellness programming, recognizing the link between personal and business finances for many small business owners.

Alternatives provides an example of high-quality technical assistance from a depository CDFI.

the gender is not the primary differentiator in their work, noting that “depending on the person's gender or any real factor other than of course, like just our staff's overall sensitivity to trying to work with people and meet them where they're at with their technological needs or their learning styles or things along those lines.”

Continuous Improvements in Technical Assistance

In early 2025, Alternatives introduced the Initiate platform to complement their existing technical assistance programming by enhancing online and asynchronous options, increasing touch points with recipients, and increasing data tracking. For other CDFIs that are considering upgrading their systems, Nellenback shared that the process including significant planning and integration with existing workflows and the culture of the credit union to be successful – all levels of the organization had to get on board with the change. Alternatives received a state grant to help with the initial purchase of the software and notes that this external funding helped to support the cost of the transition. Nellenback noted that the transition process took two years to conceive of, identify the proper resources to support their goals, train staff and roll out the program. With the data that is collected through the new system, Alternatives intends to build out their already robust data tracking for technical assistance to include modeling economic and community impacts.

In recent years, Alternatives has also shifted its technical assistance delivery model from consultants to in-house services. Alternatives has found that this makes it easier for staff to be ambassadors of all of Alternative’s offerings and helping clients link to the depository and loan products that might be a good fit for them. It has also reduced some of the administrative burden of managing consultants.

Nellenback also points to the importance of partners in the success of the credit union’s technical assistance based on relationships with other providers and community-focused groups across their service area. Alternatives’ goals include creating a referral network to more effectively serve entrepreneurs collectively as well as create awareness of the wide range of services available collectively. To foster successful partnerships, Alternatives seeks to identify groups with some level of mission overlap with the credit union and those that are collaborative and willing to “amplify each other’s work” rather than be competitive. Nellenback adds that having a clear understanding of who your organization has partnered with and why can help use staff time more efficiently as staff attend events or otherwise collaborate with organizations with a clear connection.

One final shift Alternatives is making with their technical assistance, is moving small business support program to be situated under financial wellness programming generally. This supports their observations that given the small scale of the businesses they serve, concepts of business financial success are often closely linked to the individual entrepreneurs' personal financial strengths and knowledge.

Metropolitan Economic Development Association (MEDA)

MEDA is based in Minneapolis, MN

Learn more at <https://meda.net>

MEDA operates under the theory of change that wealth creation is an effective antidote to economic inequities, and successful entrepreneurship is the most effective tool for building generational wealth and it remains integral to creating the world we want. To support this theory of change, MEDA provides small business loans paired with a wrap-around suite of technical assistance and business consulting services.

FUND CI spoke to several MEDA team members to inform this case study, including Dorothy Bridges, President and CEO; Catherine McCarthy, Director of Development; and Raynette Buerke, Loan Administration Manager.

Key learnings from MEDA:

Technical assistance offerings are “laser focused” and intentional to align with the strategic plan and reduce costs.

Technical assistance is one pillar of support in their overall model, paired with capital and connections.

In-depth tracking informs technical assistance offerings and is leveraged to access funding.

The MEDA Approach

MEDA approaches its work with a three-pillar approach. The pillars work together to comprehensively support their entrepreneur clients. First, consulting, including technical assistance and one-on-one consulting. MEDA provides technical assistance in multiple forms, providing support both pre-loan through business consulting services, throughout the closing process as well as after loan closing. Second, capital, through MEDA’s loan program, which provides businesses with access to the capital needed to achieve their goals. Finally, through connections MEDA helps entrepreneurs get in the room with other entrepreneurs to learn from their peers. MEDA also helps to provide connections to major corporations and assists with contract development.

In addition to providing consulting to clients both pre- and post-loan, MEDA’s team works closely with borrowers to assemble necessary documentation for their loan and to update their financial systems to prepare for their loan. This includes helping to file past taxes, to connect with an accountant and prepare financial statements, etc. Buerke explained the close interplay with the MEDA team including the business consultants and lending team,

for example as the loan closing team sees deficiencies in the documentation, they communicate to the business consultants to identify coaching or technical assistance to improve the borrower's systems going forward.

Bridges explained that one key to the successes of MEDA's technical assistance program is that it is very intentional and integrated into the organization's strategic plan. MEDA provides a set of technical assistance offerings and if the client's needs do not fall within those offerings MEDA will refer them to other providers. MEDA has found that providing customized services to each client is cost prohibitive and creates confusion with the clients and providers. Bridges recommends, "the advice that I would give in any other organization that is trying to provide this technical assistance is not to use a shotgun blast to try and provide technical assistance [to all] but be very laser focused on what you provide."

Bridges also recommends that other CDFIs leverage the CDFI funding model to identify funding for their technical assistance programs. MEDA often pairs debt capital from banks and philanthropies with grant capital from the same sources and has achieved this by framing the grant portion as a way to de-risk the capital that has been deployed given that the technical assistance helps with the long-term success and payback rate of the loan. She notes, "you know, lots of people like to put a time-bound approach to technical assistance, and that's not what I see as useful," noting that long-term relationships with clients can have long-term benefits.

Leveraging Data

MEDA takes tracking seriously. Data tracking for technical assistance is embedded into several roles within the organization, including the business consultants and members of the lending team, each of which track the time spent on technical assistance in MEDA's CRM system. McCarthy shared that the data helps MEDA to see how they perform year-over-year, including how they are serving clients, where, what industries etc. As the Director of Development, McCarthy leverages this data when speaking to partners to better describe MEDA's work. The data is also benchmarked against national trends for job creation and business revenue growth. Tracking informs what subjects are covered for technical assistance – if there are common challenges faced by borrowers; MEDA develops a series of workshops or incorporates information into the newsletter to help share knowledge with clients.

Partner Community Capital (PCAP)

PCAP is based in Charles Town, WV
Learn more at <https://partnercap.org/>

Partner Community Capital (PCAP) is a small business loan fund that supports entrepreneurs who are creating jobs and businesses in underserved communities in central Appalachia and the Southeast. PCAP combines lending with targeted business advisory services, partnerships, and grant funding to provide specialized help to particular sectors, regions or borrowers, so they can overcome barriers to growing businesses and creating jobs.

PCAP provides a wide range of technical assistance to its small business clients, such as help with websites, accounting systems, certifications, packaging, and more. PCAP also draws on internal and external experts to help with other needs, like setting up QuickBooks and developing marketing strategies to site location and architectural analysis. Client needs are identified through business advisory services that focus on target sectors, regions, or groups of underserved entrepreneurs. PCAP also offers workshops, training, personalized coaching, and hands-on technical support.

FUND CI interviewed Madeline Coffman, PCAP's Business Services Manager, for this case study.

Women-Focused Programming

PCAP has organized its technical assistance into several focus programs, one of which is the West Virginia Women's Business Center. The center was originally housed under the SBA but is now integrated into PCAP. The services offered through the business center PCAP's mirror other technical assistance offerings, but the center utilizes a different marketing strategy to attract women.

Key learnings from PCAP:

PCAP has adapted its positioning and approach to create spaces and programming that are inviting to women through its West Virginia Women's Business Center inviting space.

PCAP conducts extensive relationship building to create trust in local communities.

PCAP creates "personas" to proactively identify and prepare technical assistance needs.

Coffman reflected on the approach of the Women’s Business Center, saying “we are targeting a very specific group of people to make sure that they don't go under the radar. The products that we run through our Women's Business Center are targeted with women in mind. [Women are] more likely to join the trainings. They're more likely to join the group resources, to participate in mentorships, to reach out to others for help. But unless you have those resources available and the time to put into those things, their needs go overlooked and they don't get the assistance that they're looking for and that they're needing.”

Building Trust and Anticipating Need

PCAP is intentionally about building trust within the communities it serves. West Virginia is very rural, and communities tend to be insular. To connect with entrepreneurs in West Virginia and establish trust, PCAP has developed community champions. Staff travel extensively throughout the state to meet with local stakeholders and provide opportunities for in-person gatherings and relationship building. One critical way of building trust has been to hire from within communities, thereby serving as a job creator in the community and gaining local knowledge. Coffman notes that, “having that trust between our clients and our employees, it is super, super important because in general the CDFI industry I think is viewed by clients, female or male, as too good to be true.”

PCAP also works to proactively identify and prepare for technical assistance needs by creating “personas”, which define what an entrepreneur in a particular industry and/ or geography would typically need. This allows PCAP to identify what they might need and go out and find the resources to solve those problems before the next client even comes in the door. Coffman shared the example of working in McDowell County, West Virginia. PCAP identified that there are many small business resources that are lacking in the area, such as access to a bookkeeper. PCAP proactively went out to the area and identified bookkeepers and went through their procurement and contracting process so that they would have vetted bookkeepers available when the next entrepreneur needed them rather than making them wait through the process.

Coffman summarizes this approach, stating “we study the people that are coming to us and the people we want to attract, and we try to predict the problems that they're going to run into based off of where are they located, what's their community like, what's already in place, what businesses are already there, etc.”

Northern Initiatives

Northern Initiatives is based in Marquette, MI
Learn more about <https://northerninitiatives.org/>

Northern Initiatives provides loans and business services to Michigan entrepreneurs and small business owners who add jobs and help their communities thrive.

In addition to funding, business owners need support to reach their goals and sustain success. A key part of Northern Initiatives' value proposition is offering funding and ongoing advising support, combined with 24/7 access to online resources through its popular Initiate online learning platform.

FUND CI interviewed Stacey Zielinski, Initiate Director, and Israel Flores, Director of Business Services, for this profile.

The Northern Initiatives Approach

The Northern Initiatives approach is to not view small business loans in isolation but rather pairing them with small business supports through technical assistance. Zielinski shared the importance of working in collaboration and viewing the business owner as a partner in the process, explaining, "They consider us the experts, and I mean we have all this knowledge and resources, but at the end of the day, they are the experts. They know their business perfectly. So, they are the ones who need to be taking the opportunities and what's best for their business."

Zielinski shared several key learnings that have made Northern Initiative's technical assistance programs successful. First, knowing that every business owner has different needs for their businesses and has a unique learning style that works best for them. Second, Zielinski shared the importance of collaborative learning and providing opportunities for small business owners to learn from each other. Third, while there will be similarities in technical assistance needs, each business owner will benefit from customization to meet their particular needs. Northern Initiative's approach combines all

Key learnings from Northern Initiatives:

Northern Initiatives uses assessments to customize its technical assistance to clients' needs and learning styles.

Northern Initiatives uses a blending learning style, pairing online, asynchronous learning with business consultants and collaborative learning opportunities.

The Initiate platform supports Northern Initiatives' technical assistance approach and has been adopted by CDFIs nationally.

three – pairing customizable and asynchronous training through Initiate paired with cohort learning opportunities to meet each clients' needs.

A business assessment tool anchors Northern Initiative's approach. Importantly, the business assessment is also administered on an ongoing basis to track changes in the business owner's acumen and identify if new challenges have arisen for the business. There are assessments that are embedded in Initiate that can be taken on an ongoing basis – users are prompted to taken them every three months.

Small businesses have undergone significant upheaval in recent years through the Covid pandemic, fluctuations in import costs, etc. and as such Northern Initiatives has expanded their focus on short-term scenario planning. Through this work, Northern Initiatives helps small business owners to reflect more on their cash flow positions and understand how interruptions and external factors can affect their business.

The Initiate Platform

Initiate is Northern Initiatives Platform to learn provide technical assistance. Initiate started because, as Northern Initiatives expanded geographically, it became hard to sufficiently and efficiently reach clients across the geography in person. Today, Initiate has evolved into a technical assistance platform used by dozens of CDFIs and other microlenders nationally. The platform provides an online portal to tools in four key focus areas: Starting a business, Money, Marketing, and Management, supporting business owners at every stage. Currently, the platform includes over 130 interactive business guides, templates, videos, and calculators. The platform can be accessed at any time by the user, allowing them to work through materials at their own pace, when it works for their schedule.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Areas of Future Research

Overall, this research found that staff of small business-focused CDFIs do not perceive that gender plays a role in their organization's technical assistance programs. Instead of gender, CDFIs that participated in the survey or interview phases of this research, pointed to other determinants such as the borrower's financial acumen; the business's strengths or weaknesses; the business's stage; etc.

While CDFIs did not identify gender as a factor generally, initial data suggest there is a drop off between the proportion of organizations' technical assistance that is provided to women compared to the proportion of loans provided to women. This is an area that warrants additional research to understand why more technical assistance may go to women whereas more loans go to men. The research highlighted certain nuances such as different needs based on business type and related credit need; jointly-owned "mom and pop" style operations that take on different roles; and outcomes of technical assistance that are not receiving a loan. Additional work remains to untangle these and other nuances.

The landscape analysis included within this report provides an important baseline for small business-focused CDFIs to understand what is common for technical assistance programs. This allows organizations that seek to build out a technical assistance program or evolve an existing program to understand industry standards and have a better blueprint of what to build to. For example, while in-person programming continues to be important for small business-focused CDFIs, it is now standard to offer online options to support learners, accommodate a range of schedules, and increase geographic reach. Additionally, by providing a baseline and average, the landscape analysis also helps to identify programs that are innovative or otherwise exceptional. The landscape analysis also helped to answer research questions related to understanding how CDFIs respond to meet the technical assistance needs of women borrowers and identifying tactics CDFIs use to identify needed technical assistance topics.

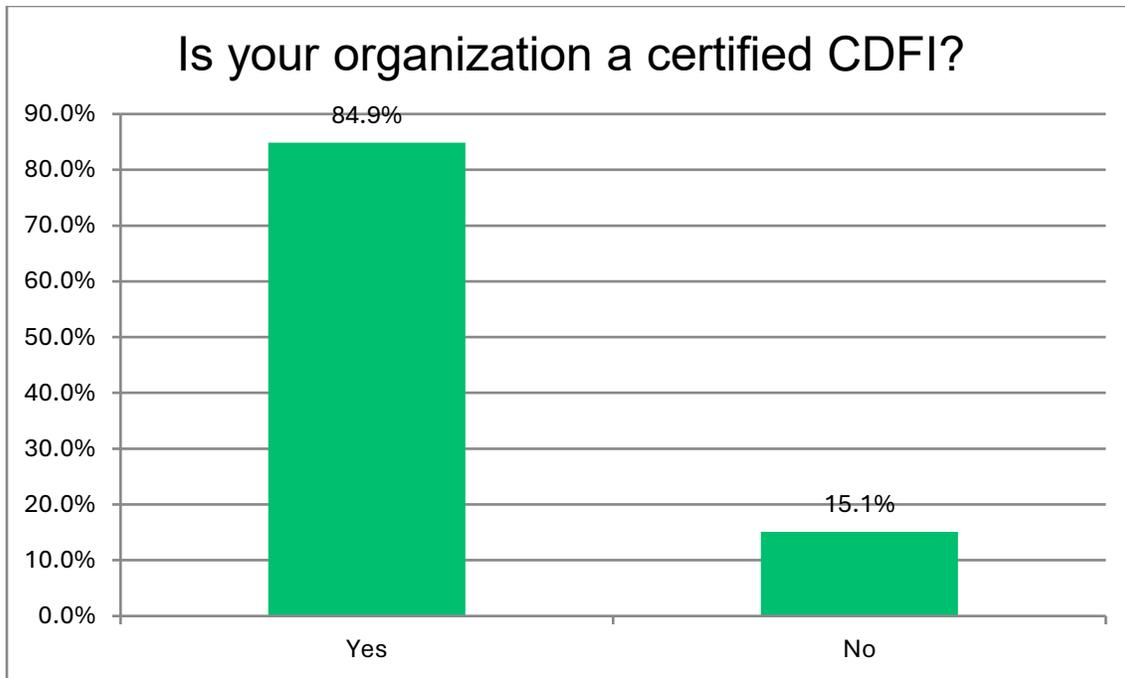
An additional area of future research would be to further differentiate between types of technical assistance. Pre-loan and post-loan technical assistance was considered equally within this report, though gender may play a different role in how each is provided. Additionally, the timing of the technical assistance should inform future data collection efforts. Finally, future work may consider how are gender-based lending rates are situated in the larger economy. If the underlying geography does not have an even split in business ownership, how should that be considered for small business-focused CDFIs in terms of their goals and outreach efforts, etc.

Appendix A: Survey Responses by Question

The following provides details on each survey question. Where included all responses from open-ended questions are provided as they were written within the survey, though any identifying information has been redacted.

1) Is your organization a certified CDFI? N=86

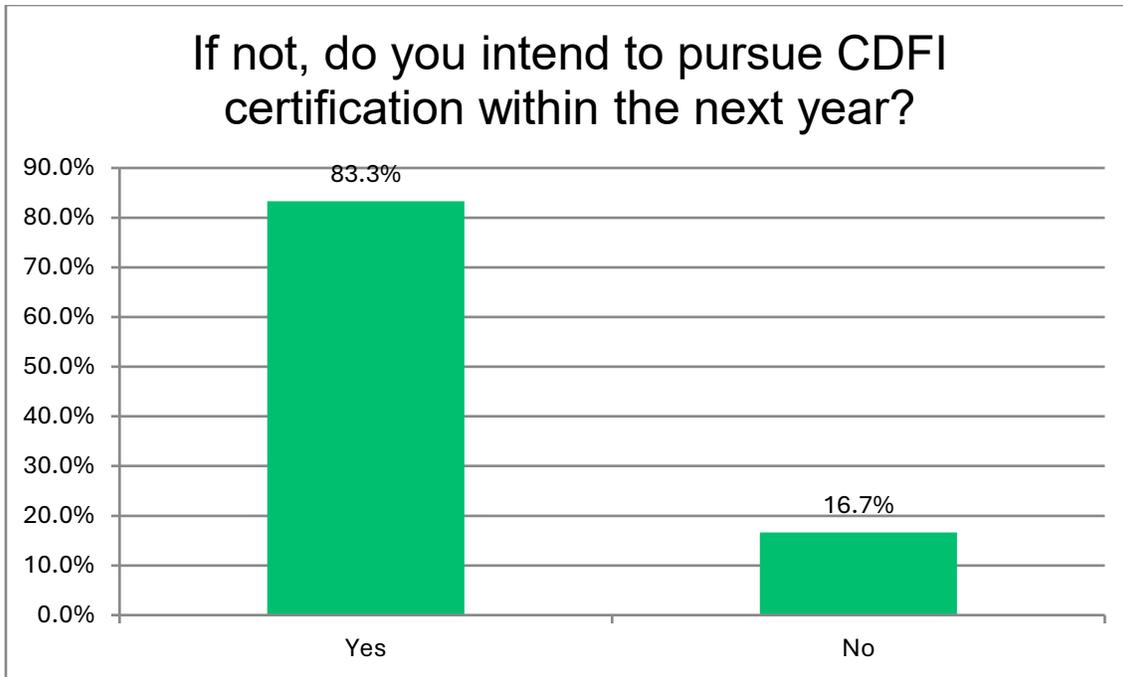
Key takeaway: The vast majority of surveyed organizations were certified as CDFIs (84.9%).



Note: Question 2 was only asked of respondents who answered No in question 1, indicating they are not yet a certified CDFI.

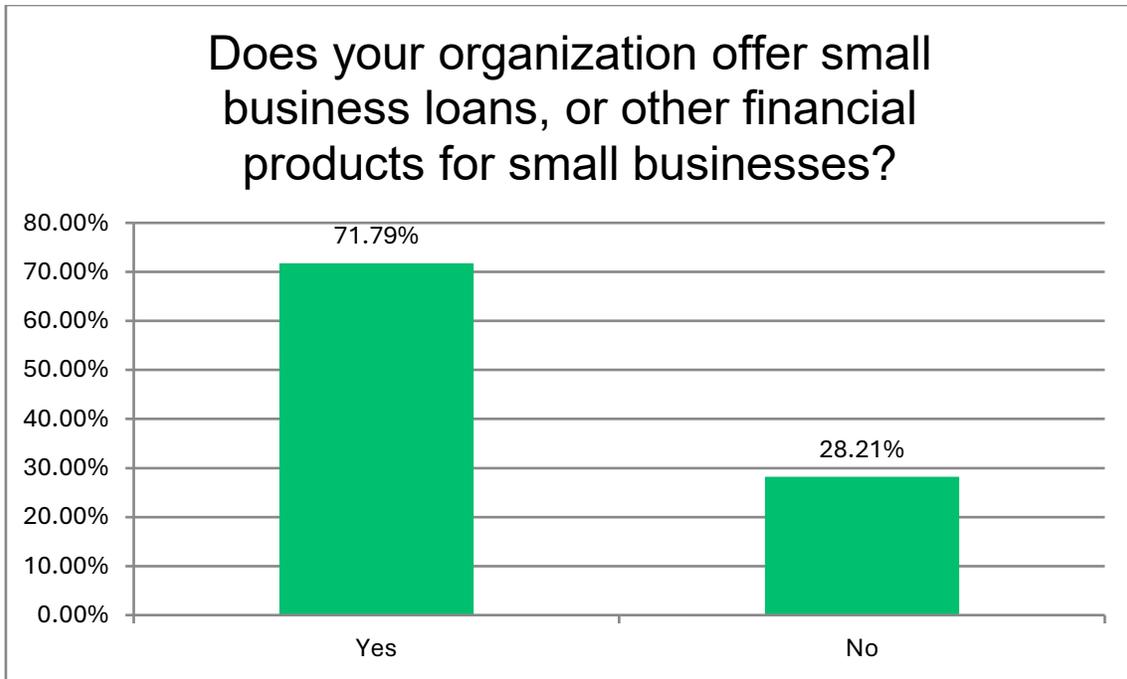
2) If not, do you intend to pursue CDFI certification within the next year? N=74

Key takeaways: Of respondents who were not yet certified, the majority plan to pursue certification in the next two. Overall, the survey primarily reached organizations that are CDFIs or intend to become CDFIs.



- 3) Does your organization offer small business loans, or other financial products for small businesses? The CDFI Fund’s definitions of microenterprise and small business lending are included for reference, but please self-define based on your organization’s categorization of your loan products. Microenterprise: Financing to a for-profit or non-profit enterprise that has five or fewer employees (including the proprietor) with an amount of no more than \$50,000 for a purpose that is not connected to the development (including construction of new facilities and rehabilitation/enhancement of existing facilities), management, or leasing of real estate. Small business: Financing to for-profit and nonprofit businesses with more than five employees or in an amount greater than \$50,000 for a purpose that is not connected to the development (including construction of new facilities and rehabilitation/enhancement of existing facilities), management, or leasing of real estate. N=78

Key takeaway: The majority of respondents (71.8%) currently provide small business loans or similar products.



Note: Question 4 was only asked of respondents who answered No in question 3, indicating they do not offer small business loans or similar products.

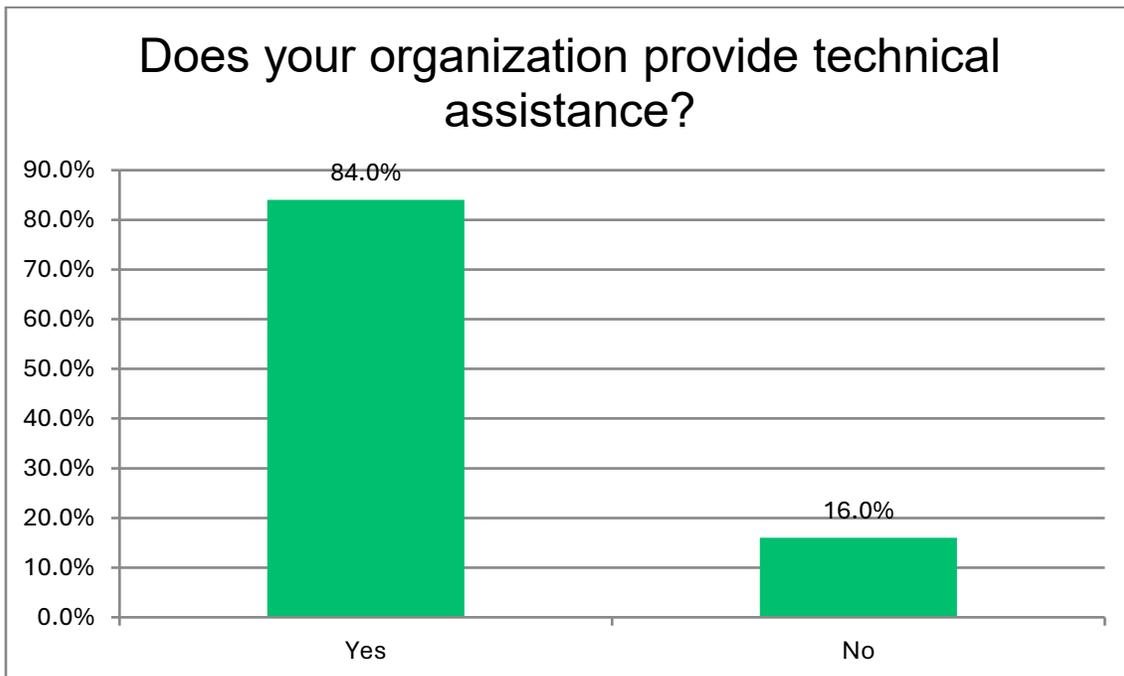
- 4) Does your organization plan to offer small business financing products within the next year? N=21

Key takeaway: About one quarter of respondents who do not currently provide small business financing plan to add such a product over the next year. Overall, the majority of respondents currently do or plan to offer small business financing.



5) Does your organization provide technical assistance? N=75

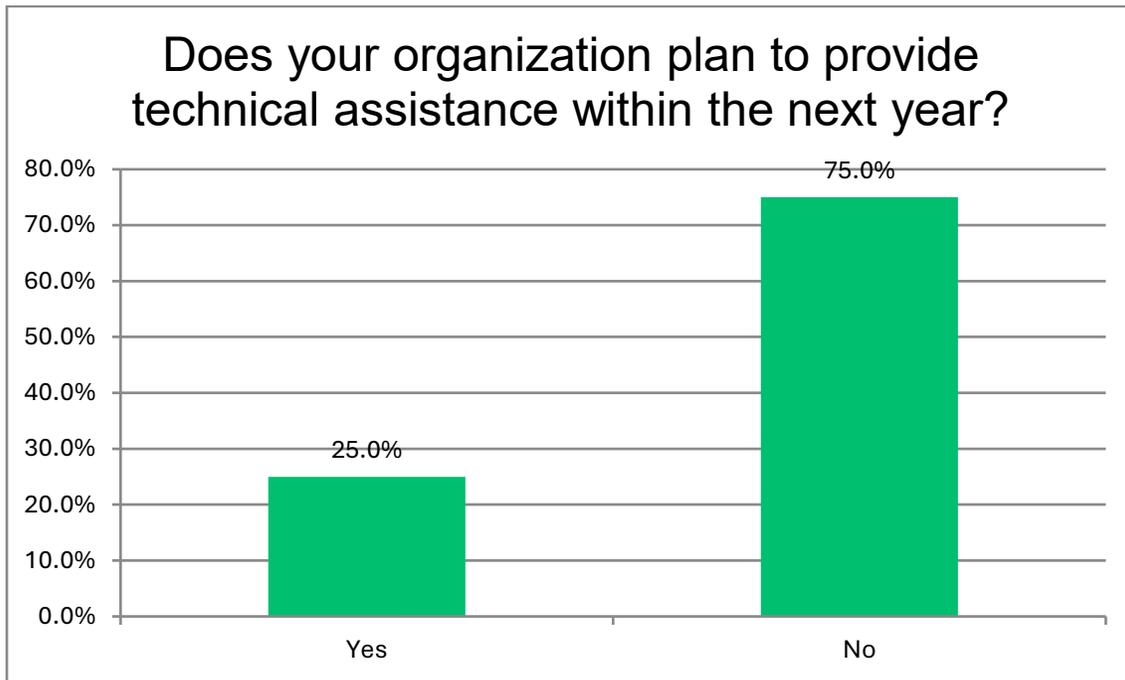
Key takeaway: The majority of respondents (84.0%) identified that they provide technical assistance.



Note: Question 6 was only asked of those respondents who answered No to Question 5, indicating they do not yet provide technical assistance.

- 6) Does your organization plan to provide technical assistance within the next year?
N=12

Key takeaway: Three respondents that do not currently provide technical assistance plan to offer it within the next year. The remaining 9 respondents who identified that they do not currently and do not plan to provide technical assistance were taken to the end of the survey.



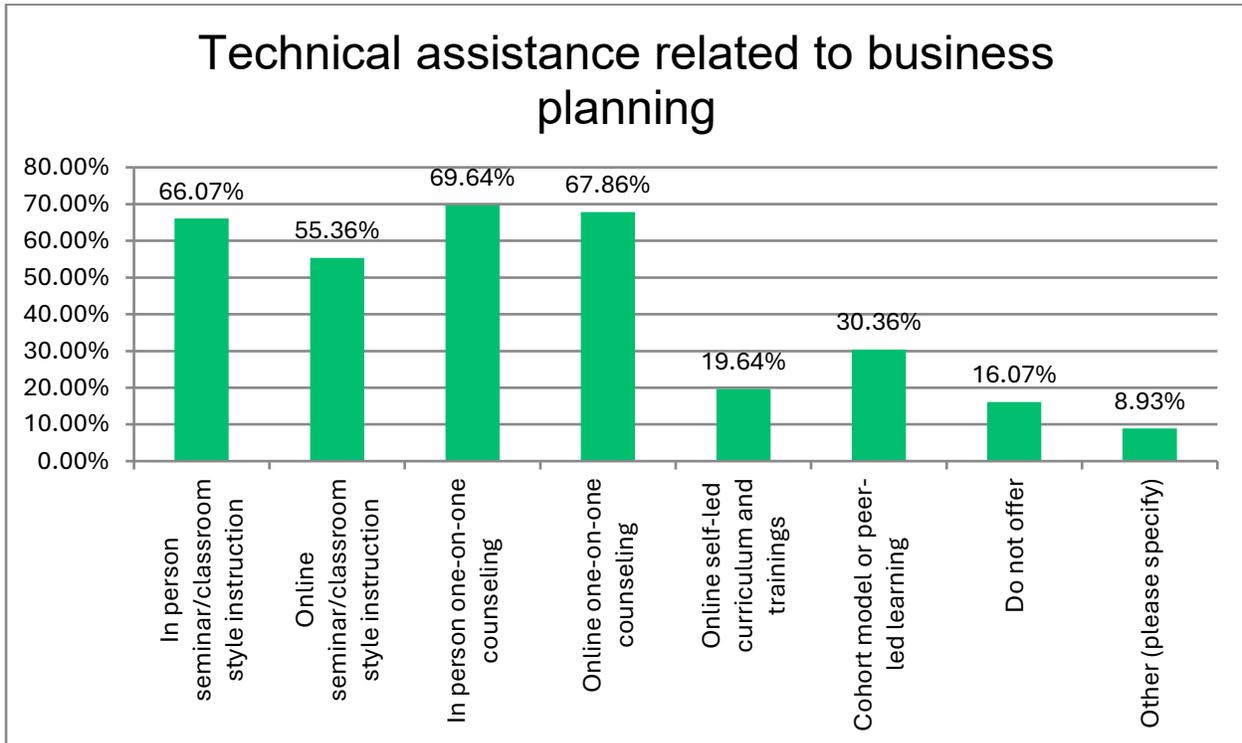
Note: Respondents that responded No to question 6, indicating that they do not currently provide technical assistance and do not plan to provide technical assistance within the next year were directed to the end of the survey.

Questions 7 through 12 collecting information on types of technical assistance CDFIs provide and through what format.

- 7) Technical assistance related to business planning (select all formats that apply).
N=56

Key takeaways: Technical assistance related to business planning is provided a variety of formats, including most commonly in-person one-on-one counseling,

online one-on-one counseling and in-person seminar or classroom style instruction. A high proportion of respondents indicate that they provide technical assistance related to business planning (83.9%).

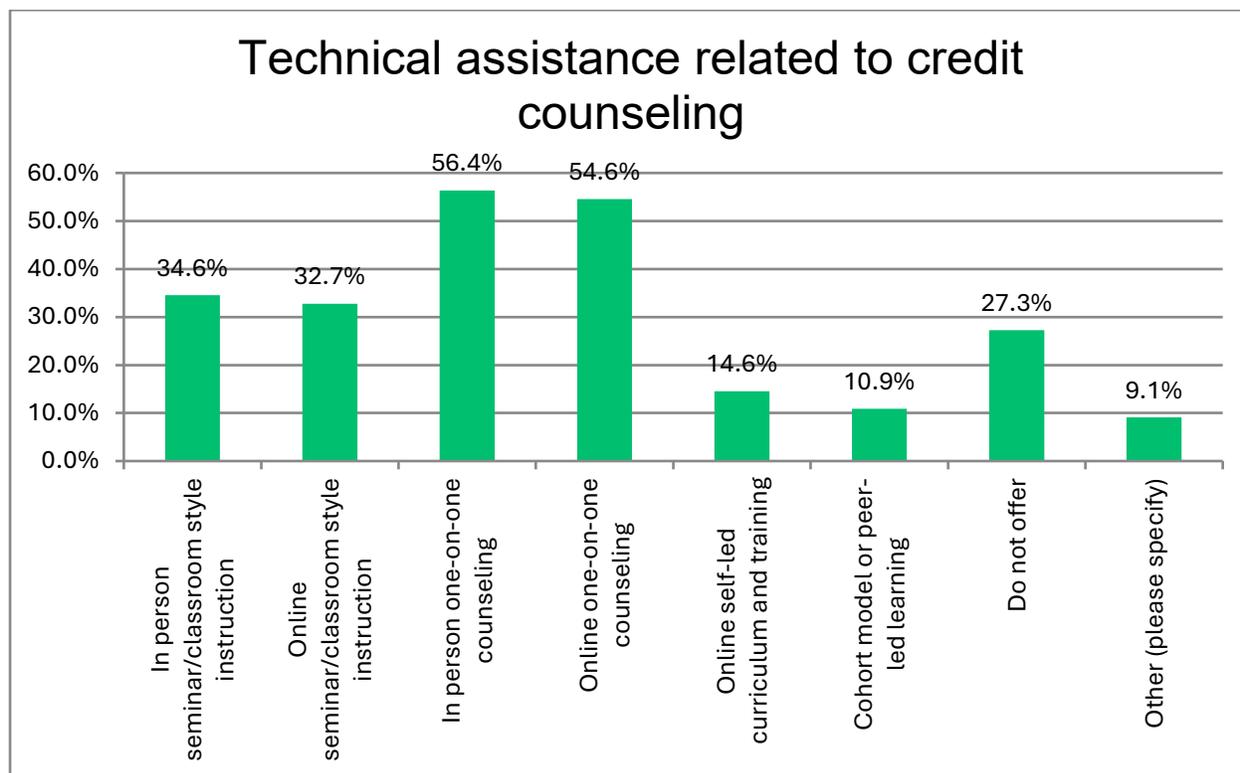


Responses:

- provide information on opportunities specific to their industries regularly
- Will be in person after we move into our new space this month.
- Partner with third parties
- via Phone Call
- referral to 3rd party vendor

8) Technical assistance related to credit counseling (select all formats that apply)
N=55

Key takeaways: Technical assistance related to credit counseling was less common with 72.7% of respondents indicating that they provide this counseling, but it is still provided by the majority of respondents. By a wide margin, the most popular formats are one-on-one counseling, either in an in-person setting or online.



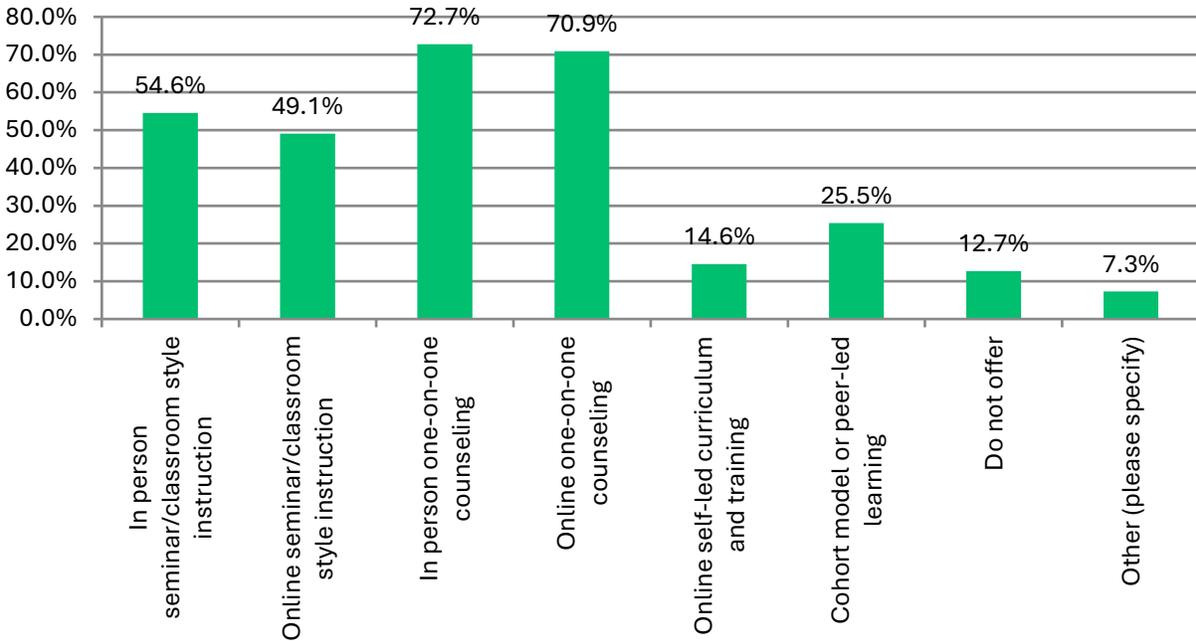
Responses:

- collaborative referrals
- We currently do not have a staff member to conduct these trainings, but when we do, they happen annually and in person on demand
- Partner with Greenpath
- referral to 3rd party vendor
- While we have seminar and webinar training on credit topics we are not counselors.

9) Technical assistance related to finances, such as financial management or cash flow analysis? (select all formats that apply) N=55

Key takeaways: Nearly 90% of respondents (87.3%) indicated that they provide technical assistance related to finances in various formats. Most commonly this was provided as in-person or online one-on-one counseling, though other delivery methods were also frequently identified.

Technical assistance related to finances, such as financial management or cash flow analysis?



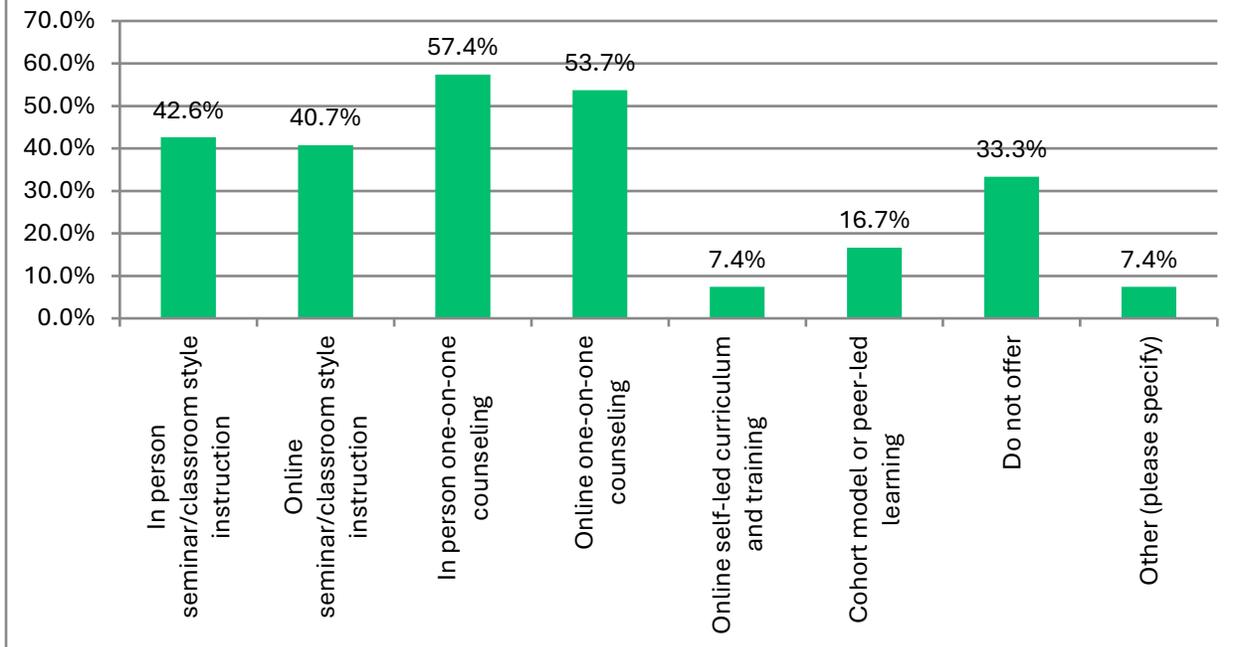
Responses:

- Partner with Greenpath
- via Phone Call
- just started working with some CPA partners to provide assistance to our borrowers
- referral to 3rd party vendor

10) Technical assistance related to operations such as accounting, software, etc.
(select all formats that apply) N=54

Key takeaways: Technical assistance related to operations was less commonly identified, though two-thirds of respondents did identify that they provide it in a variety of formats.

Technical assistance related to operations such as accounting, software, etc.



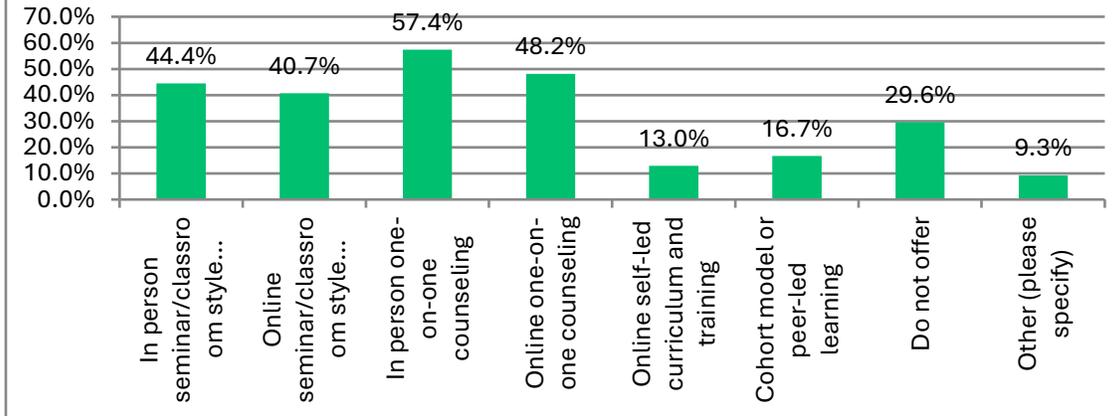
Responses:

- Hire an accounting firm to provide the training
- via Phone Call
- just started working with some CPA partners to provide assistance to our borrowers
- referral to 3rd party vendor

11) Technical assistance related to marketing, including traditional sources and online platforms (select all formats that apply). N=54

Key takeaways: 70.4% of respondents identified providing technical assistance related to marketing. Here, there was a greater preference to in-person trainings than other formats with a greater proportion of respondents providing in-person one-on-one counseling and in-person training compared to their online counterparts.

Technical assistance related to marketing, including traditional sources and online platforms (select all formats that apply).

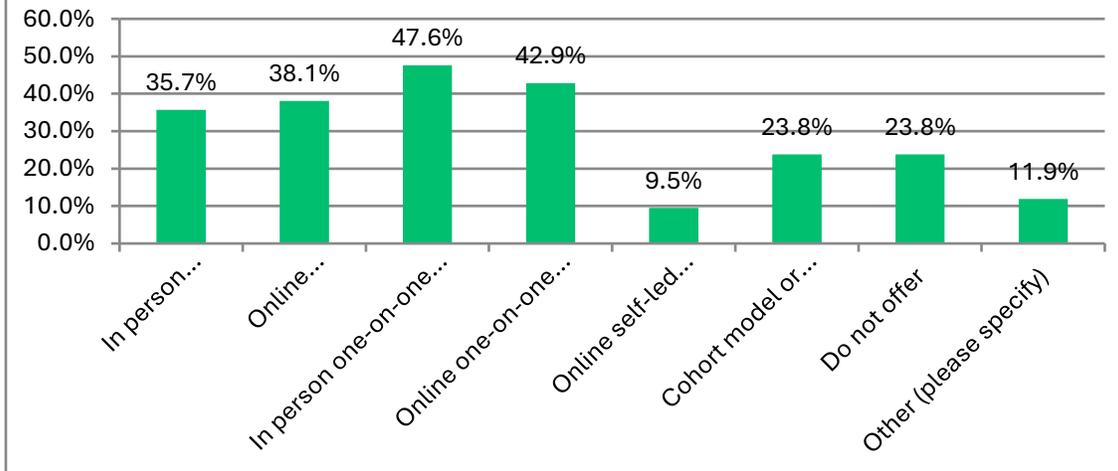


Responses:

- Hire a public relations person to provide the T/A
- via Phone Call
- refer to other community partners who offer marketing training
- referral to 3rd party vendor
- We work closely with partner organizations that provide this type of TA, so we refer clients to them and remain involved in the process.

12) Technical assistance on other content not yet identified in this survey (select all formats that apply): N=42

Technical assistance on other content not yet identified in this survey (select all formats that apply):



Responses:

- market access , loan packaging, lease review ,incorporation
- Partner with third party
- Indianpreneurship curriculum
- industry specific peer groups
- referral to 3rd party vendor

13) Please provide a description of other content not yet included in this survey. N=19

Key takeaway: Respondents provided multiple responses for other types of technical assistance that was not captured in the survey's generalized buckets, reflecting the far-ranging nature of technical assistance amongst CDFIs. Several themes include providing generalized business coaching; training in other skills that may assist entrepreneurs such as public speaking, negotiation skills, technology, etc.; providing sector specific programming; training that may specifically start-ups or minority businesses; etc.

Responses:

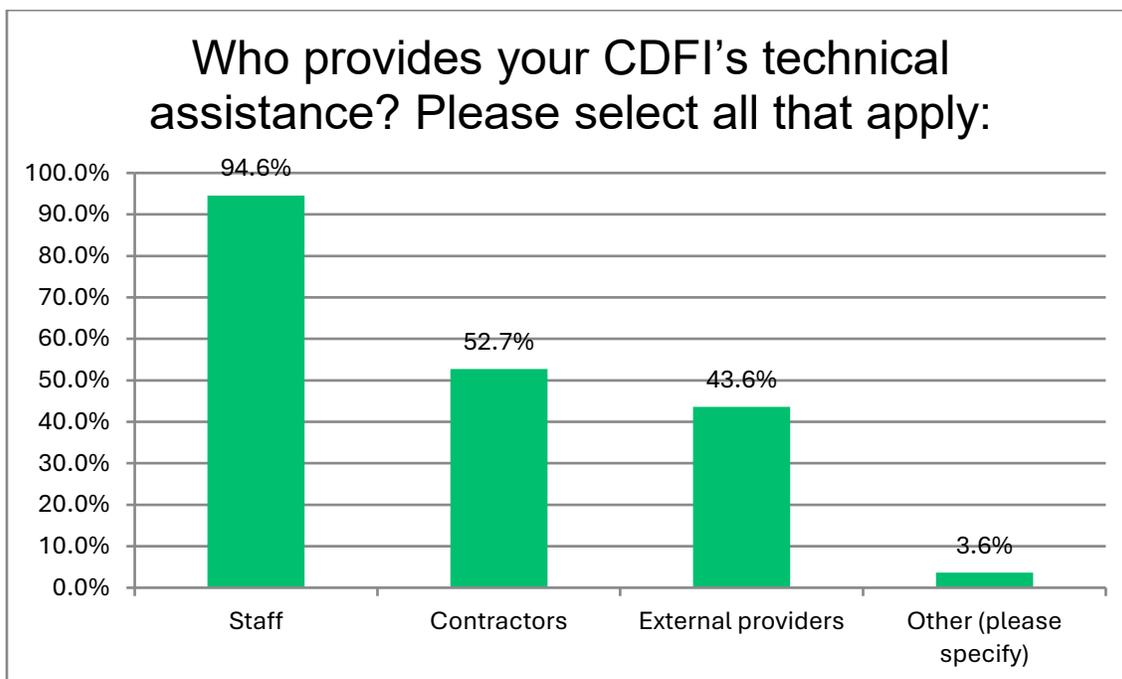
- How to qualify for a business loan
- Coaching has proven to be an effective tool especially if the coach studies the industry trends for any business that requires t/a. The

difference btw coaching and t/a is that all coaching is life coaching and, thereby, has a different relationship to the plan than the t/a provider. Not all businesses, however, want or need a coach

- Depending on what an entrepreneur needs and values, we help them accomplish one or more of the 36 coaching activities we describe here: REDACTED
- Digital Marketing
- We offer TA on readiness to access our financial products which are focused on affordable housing real estate lending.
- Grant writing for small businesses
- We teach finance and lending for small business with local 501c.
- We cover topics such as public speaking and negotiations, setting boundaries, cohort learning that is sector specific (childcare, weatherization, aquaculture), and cohort learning that encourages women to start or grow technology businesses
- Sector-specific programs focused on child care businesses, weatherization businesses, food/ag businesses, aquaculture businesses.
- Refer to the response to Question 9.
- Small Business Module specifically designed for Start-Ups Small Business Module specifically designed for Small Business Management.
- 1. Quality Jobs Methods. 2.Repricing strategies in face of tariffs.
- starting to offer assistance with hiring
- Capital access - identifying funding sources and preparing for funding; business plan preparation
- Minority certainly etc
- mentorship
- work for your self 50 plus and work we do with verison
- Minority Certification, Sales & Technology
- We provide an array of in-person and web training on a variety of topics in management, marketing, finance and the emotional aspects of business ownership.

14) Who provides your CDFI's technical assistance? Please select all that apply: N=55

Key takeaway: Nearly all respondents' staff provides technical assistance (94.6%). For many, this is supplemented by contractors and external providers.



Responses:

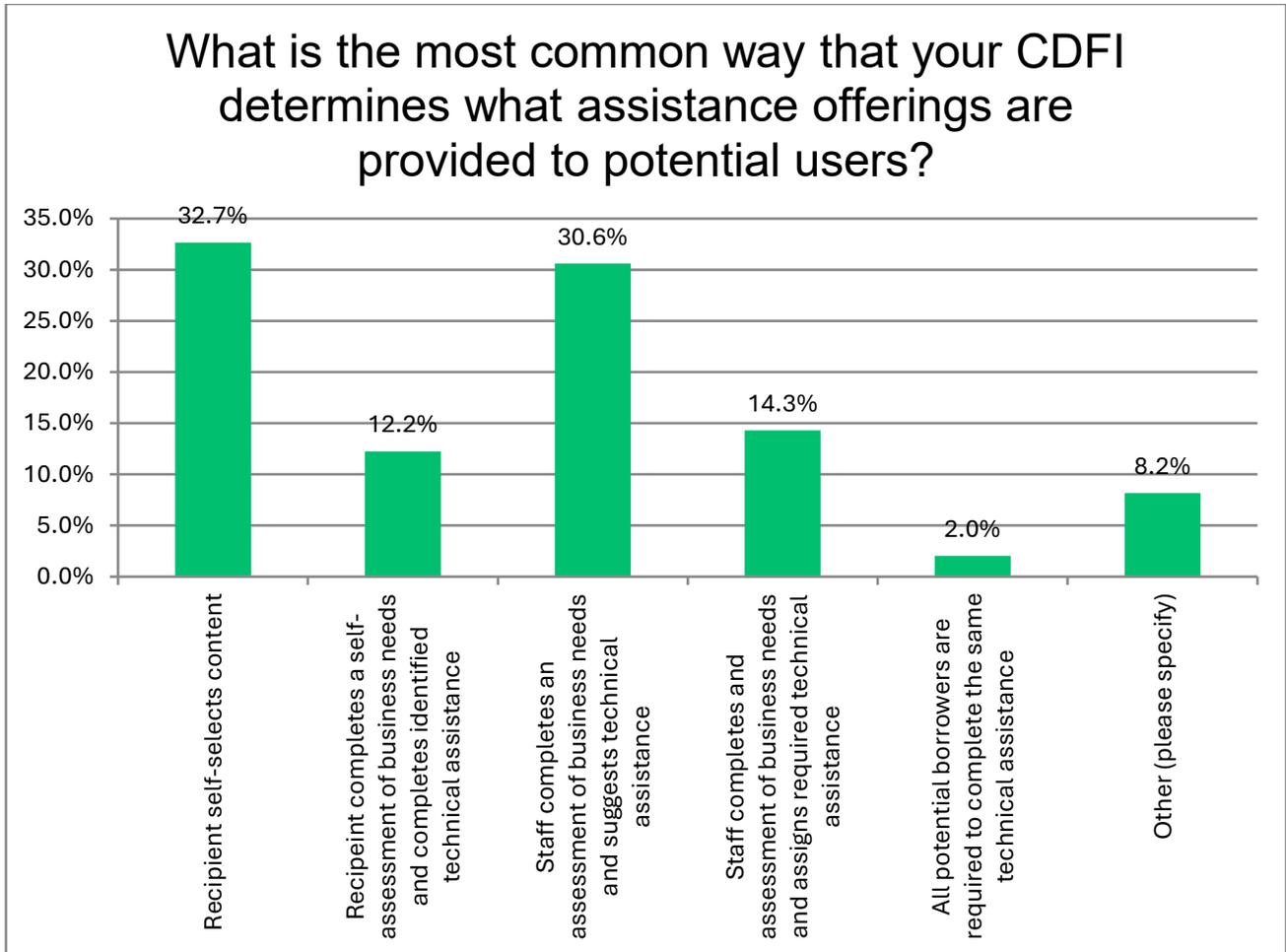
- Greenpath, others
- Initiate Prosperity (Business TA); Balance and Banzai (Financial Ed, Debt Management, Credit Counseling)

15) What is the most common way that your CDFI determines what assistance offerings are provided to potential users? N=49

Key takeaways: Question 15 and 16 are linked as they asked the first and second most common way that an organization determines technical assistance. Notably, No individual response was selected by one third of respondents for their first most common way, suggesting a high variability in how content is assigned. Most commonly selected responses were that recipients self-select content (32.7%) and staff complete an assessment and suggest content (30.6%). These two categories are also the highest choices for the second most common ways that assistance is identified.

It is uncommon for technical assistance to be a blanket requirement – this was selected as the most common way of determining technical assistance by just 2.0% of respondents and by none as their second most common way. Just 14.3%

identified that staff require a certain type of technical assistance as their most common way of determining technical assistance and 10.6% indicating that is the second most common way technical assistance is determined.

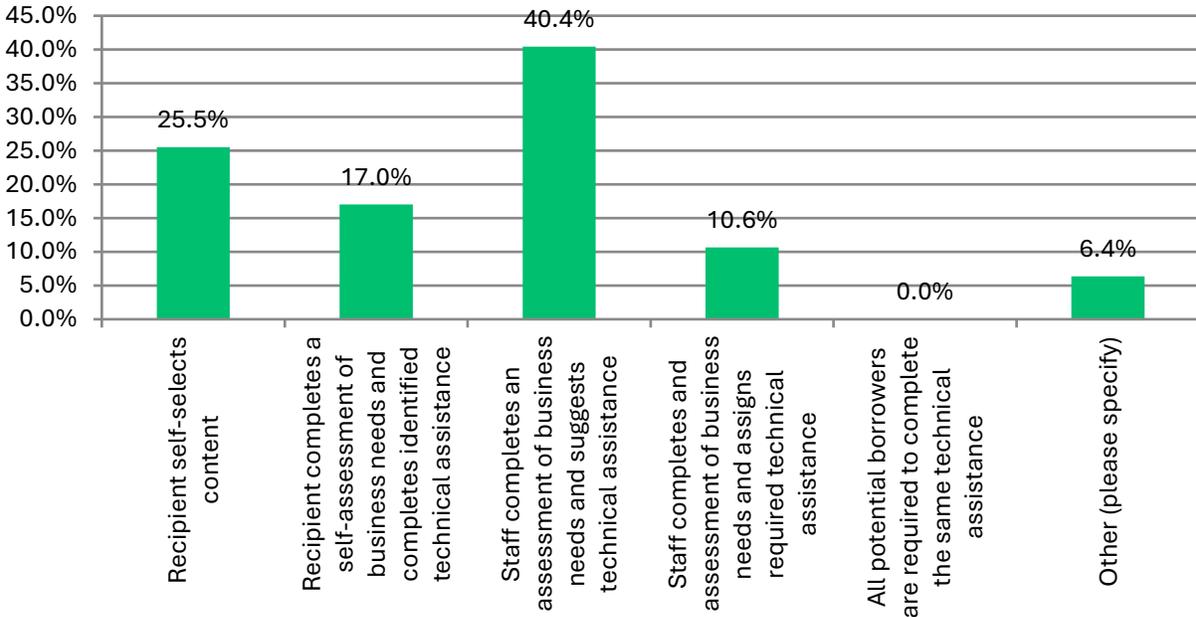


Responses:

- Work in collaboration with Womens business centers
- General marketing
- No technical assistance offered at this time.
- For borrowers, all are required to meet regularly with a staff business advisor who is qualified to coach on matters of management, marketing, finance and emotional aspects of busiess ownership based on their prior personal experience owning a small business.

16) What is the second most common way that your CDFI determines what technical assistance offerings are provided to potential recipients? N=47

What is the second most common way that your CDFI determines what technical assistance offerings are provided to potential recipients?



Responses:

- for credit counseling, they may be referred after an assessment
- 3rd party vendors
- No technical assistance offered at this time.

17) Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement, with 1 being do not agree and 100 being strongly agree: My organization's technical assistance programming is formalized with firm guidelines on which offerings recipients receive. N=50

Key takeaway: With an average response of 51.1, respondents were overall neutral on whether they agreed that their technical assistance was formalized or not. Nonetheless, there were multiple responses at either end of the spectrum. Seven respondents gave scores of less than ten, suggesting they strongly disagreed that their technical assistance programming is formalized. Eight respondents scored 90

or above, suggesting they strongly agree that their technical assistance programming is formalized.

Average answer: 51.1

Response:

- 36
- 50
- 32
- 23
- 12
- 20
- 38
- 15
- 20
- 31
- 100
- 6
- 100
- 95
- 3
- 51
- 99
- 4
- 75
- 71
- 67
- 100
- 90
- 88
- 77
- 66
- 40
- 50
- 63
- 82

- 45
- 60
- 1
- 21
- 55
- 1
- 3
- 42
- 22
- 60
- 48
- 90
- 12
- 86
- 100
- 80
- 75
- 3
- 75
- 70

18) Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement: My organization's technical assistance is responsive and tailored to clients' needs. N=50

Key takeaways: The average answer was 72.8, indicating high levels of agreement with the statement the organization's technical assistance is responsive and tailored to client's needs.

Average answer: 72.8

Responses:

- 36
- 87
- 100
- 47
- 69

- 53
- 70
- 25
- 80
- 95
- 100
- 5
- 100
- 99
- 5
- 59
- 92
- 5
- 100
- 95
- 90
- 79
- 90
- 96
- 63
- 100
- 42
- 99
- 84
- 95
- 80
- 70
- 100
- 75
- 90
- 1
- 5
- 46
- 80
- 90
- 75

- 95
- 63
- 89
- 77
- 90
- 75
- 95
- 85
- 100

19) Please rate your level of agreement with the following statement: The recipient's gender helps us to identify what technical assistance might be needed. N=42

Key takeaways: Overall, respondents generally disagreed with the statement that the recipient's gender helps to identify what technical assistance might be needed with an average answer of 18.9. There were nine responses at 50 percent or higher, indicated an agreement that gender may matter. The median response was 5, identifying strong disagreement with the statement.

Average answer: 18.9

Responses:

- 5
- 32
- 1
- 0
- 70
- 0
- 50
- 0
- 2
- 5
- 1
- 54
- 8
- 1
- 50

- 91
- 33
- 0
- 10
- 0
- 0
- 42
- 0
- 5
- 50
- 1
- 0
- 75
- 1
- 1
- 2
- 21
- 20
- 6
- 50
- 51
- 49
- 0
- 0
- 1
- 5
- 0

20) Please describe how gender helps identify what technical assistance might be needed. N=21

Key takeaways: As noted above, most respondents did not identify that gender affects what technical assistance may be needed and that was reiterated in the open responses. When gender was identified as a potential influence, it was related to identifying other programs or grants that may be able to support the business or in recognition that gender may create additional barriers that are less likely to affect men that are nonetheless evaluated separately.

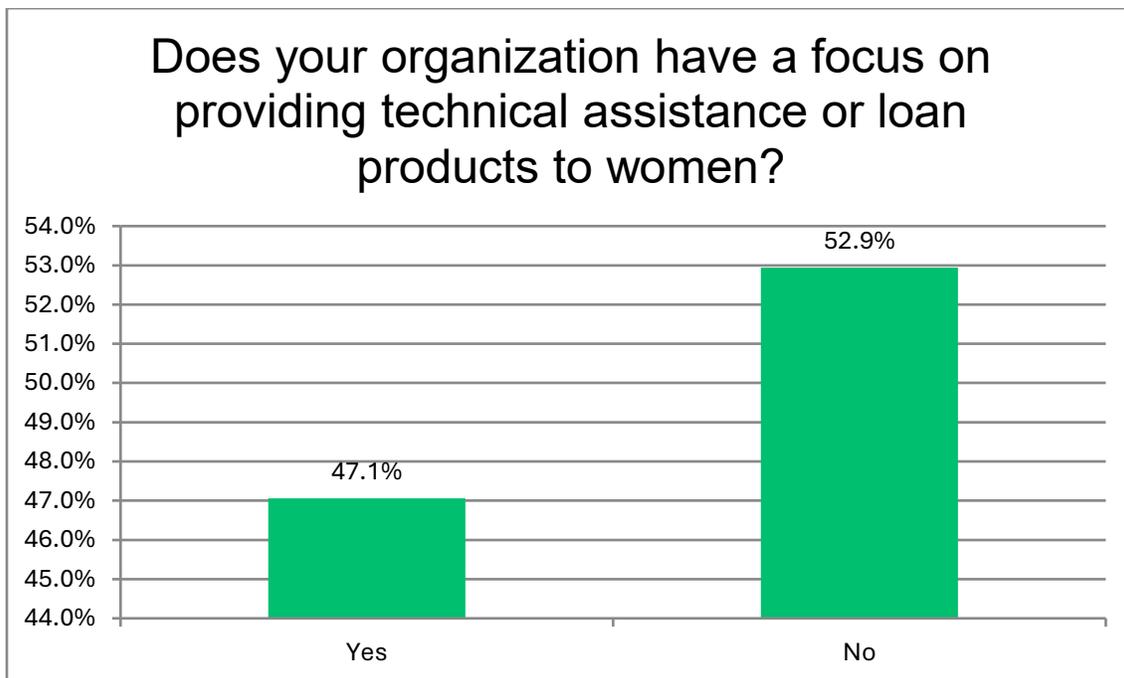
Responses:

- REDACTED collaborates with The Womens business center
- Women often face different barriers than men, e.g. lack of access to childcare. We take all of that into account on an individual basis.
- That's not been an issue in the past because we have loan programs that are specifically funded for women.
- N/A
- not at all
- Gender typically doesn't come into play - except when a business owner is eligible for a grant or additional services typically geared toward women owned businesses and women entrepreneurs, because based on data, women are less likely to be entrepreneurs, and are less likely to be eligible/receive traditional financing (this is not a myth, this is based on DATA).
- Gender identification is not a key factor.
- It is difficult that answer the above questions, b/c they assume we are 'assigning' ta. That is not our practice. However, we do create programming for businesses based on gender needs.
- We administer 3 SBA-funded Women's Business Centers. TA from those programs is not limited to women, but is tailored to their needs and, because of the name, women tend to self-select those programs.
- Determines whether small business development resources specializing in woman-owned small businesses applies.
- Not a factor
- We do serve many Women-Owned Businesses. However, our TA program, offerings and options don't necessarily change based on the gender ID of the client.
- dsfkstfjksds;ljslf
- Not at all.
- Gender does not inform us on what technical assistance may be needed.
- Gender does not factor in at all
- Gender doesn't play a conscious role.
- N/A

- Technical assistance is gender neutral, but often times our first-time borrowers are women who have little to no business experience. The TA given is addressing the acumen in all cases, regardless of gender
- women seem to be more open to help
- Half of our TA staff are women. It hasn't come up as a consideration.

21) Does your organization have a focus on providing technical assistance or loan products to women? N=24

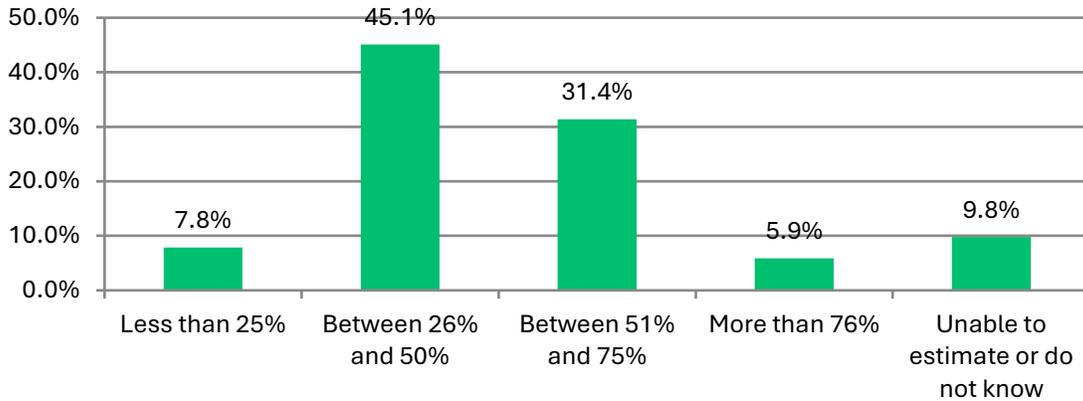
Key takeaway: Slightly more than half of organizations identified that they do not focus on women.



22) Approximately what portion of your lending, or other financial products, was provided to women in the last fiscal year? Please estimate if needed. N=51

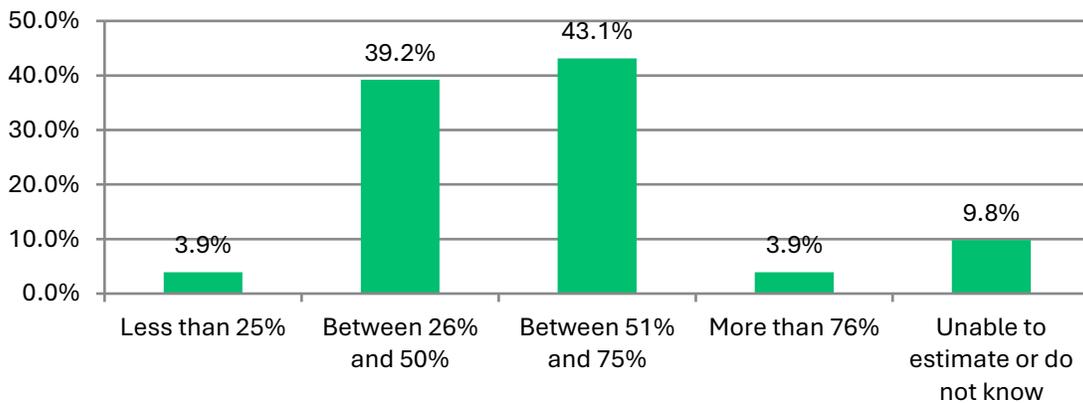
Key takeaway: When asked to estimate the portion of their lending went to women, they most commonly selected the between 26% and 50% category (45.1%), followed by the between 51% and 75% category (31.4%). This is a lower portion than the portion of their technical assistance that is provided to women as identified in question 23. There, respondents most commonly selected that between 51% and 75% of their technical assistance when to women (43.1%), followed by the 26%-50% category (39.2%).

Approximately what portion of your lending, or other financial products, was provided to women in the last fiscal year? Please estimate if needed.



23) Approximately what portion of your technical assistance provided in the last fiscal year was provided to women? Please estimate if needed. N=51

Approximately what portion of your technical assistance provided in the last fiscal year was provided to women? Please estimate if needed.



24) What are your CDFI's goals in providing technical assistance? N=38

Key takeaways: Several themes arise from the open-ended response related to organizations' goals for providing technical assistance. Themes include providing technical assistance to support the success of small businesses owners; increasing the strength of existing businesses; providing financial education; and preparing them to access capital.

Responses:

- Create financial and management capacity
- improving their ability to access capital and start/expand business
- We emphasize 1:1 mentoring tailored to each client's unique needs and situation. We help clients gain financial literacy, confidence as business owners, and prepare for taking out one of our character-based loans and, eventually, traditional loans.
- Primarily to help fulfill grants for funding operational costs
- The same as the goals for our loans: fueling the success of under resourced entrepreneurs. We see as much impact from technical assistance alone as we do from making loans.
- Assist participants to take the next step along their journey
- Financial education leading to economic mobility
- Helping businesses learn to navigate their businesses for the first 5 years; the time when it's most difficult to increase your borrowing power to give room for expansion.
- to help the business get started, get them ready for capital as well as post loan to help with specific needs.
- We believe that entrepreneurs from any background can start and grow businesses that create generational wealth for their families and communities. We provide the capital, coaching, and connections entrepreneurs need to grow great businesses that create jobs and wealth in their communities.
- helping borrowers prepare to access our capital
- REDACTED'S technical assistance is designed to help entrepreneurs and small business owners become bankable, resilient, and successful in the long term. Our goal is to ensure that startups have a strong foundation to access capital and that existing businesses receive the support they need to adapt to changing markets, retain and create quality jobs, and grow if that aligns with their goals. In our rural region, small businesses are the backbone of the local economy,

so our technical assistance ultimately aims to strengthen the local tax base and community vitality through sustained small business success.

- To support small businesses and specific sectors in Maine. We track many metrics with strong outcomes as a guiding principle
- Our CDFI's primary goal in providing technical assistance is to empower community-based organizations and small businesses by equipping them with the tools, knowledge, and resources necessary to improve their operations, strengthen financial management, and enhance overall sustainability. We focus on building financial literacy, supporting strategic planning, and helping clients navigate the complexities of accessing capital. Through this assistance, we aim to foster sustainable economic development, increase community impact, and ensure that organizations are well-positioned to serve underserved populations, create jobs, and contribute to long-term community growth and resilience.
- To promote Native American small business development in Wisconsin through small business loans and client development services, esp. in a culturally competent manner geared toward Native American entrepreneurs.
- To help a client become mortgage ready
- The goals of our program are to empower underserved entrepreneurs and small business owners with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to build sustainable and thriving businesses. It aims to increase participants' financial literacy, improve business planning and management capabilities, enhance marketing strategies, and strengthen operational efficiency. Additionally, the program seeks to prepare participants to access financial products and services as appropriate; including but not limited to financial counseling, personal and business accounts, personal and business loans and lines of credit.
- Our goal is to make sure our loan customers have the necessary tools to make their business successful.
- Address barriers to accessing capital. Provide post-loan services that drive business growth and increase business stabilization.

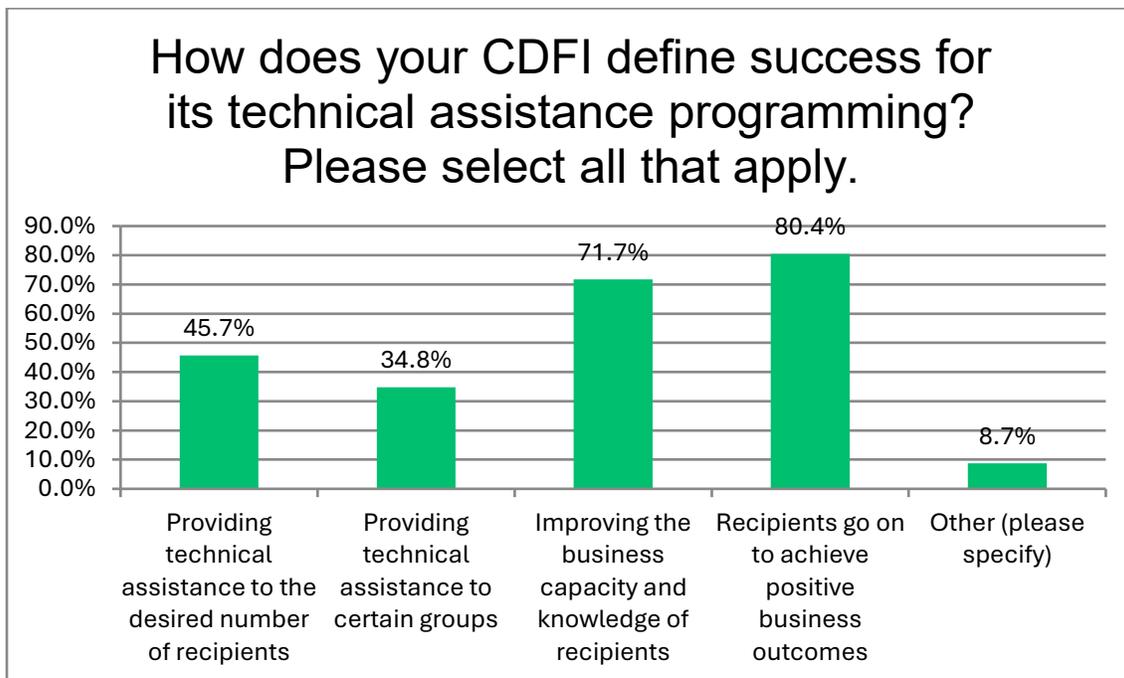
- To support the people of our small businesses, to make their business operations more successful, so they can 1) sustain their families and workers, 2) pay back their loan.
- Improving the capabilities of small business owners to take on capital and grow their business to ensure that there is a low default rate on our products.
- Provide training and capacity building to diverse developers; enable easier access to capital and successful project development;
- To track the progress for emerging market entrepreneur prospects and existing client borrowers through business planning, financial documentation comprehension, credit management, strategic marketing/target audience engagement, and loan application process understanding from novice to high acumen that "de-risks" business profiles to become hireable, bankable entities.
- strengthen business success and reduce delinquencies
- Helping client achieve their goals; build stronger, more resilient businesses, mitigate risks associated with loans
- capital ready, operational and financial stability
- We are in the process of developing a technical assistance program
- Increase client's financial capacity and strengthen their operational capabilities.
- Giving TA to help with the business sustainability
- Output (hours, services, clients) and outcomes (evidence of positive small business state change over time)
- - Redeploy capital into impactful investments.
 - Leverage partnerships with traditional financial institutions to refinance stabilized projects within REDACTED'S lending portfolio.
 - Identify and address risk factors in current loans.
 - REDACTED'S borrowers' skill sets have been enhanced, putting them in a position to take on growth opportunities if desired.
- Ensure the success of our clients' enterprises by providing assistance beyond simply financing
- to strengthen the business and meet individual needs
- Business planning, understanding projections, Quick books, social media and marketing.
- Educate the client on gaps that were identified during assessment to line them up for a stabilized and successful future.

- To help a borrower become mortgage ready.
- Strengthen ability of small business owners to run and grow their business
- Business Advisory Services, Pre-Loan Counseling and Business Education Programming are discreet offerings with varying objectives. I suppose the unifying objective is to educate, stabilize and grow small businesses in our state.

25) How does your CDFI define success for its technical assistance programming?

Please select all that apply. N=46

Key takeaways: When asked to identify how they define technical assistance success, respondents most commonly reported success being recipients that go on to achieve positive business outcomes (80.4%) as well as improving the business capacity and knowledge of recipients (71.7%).



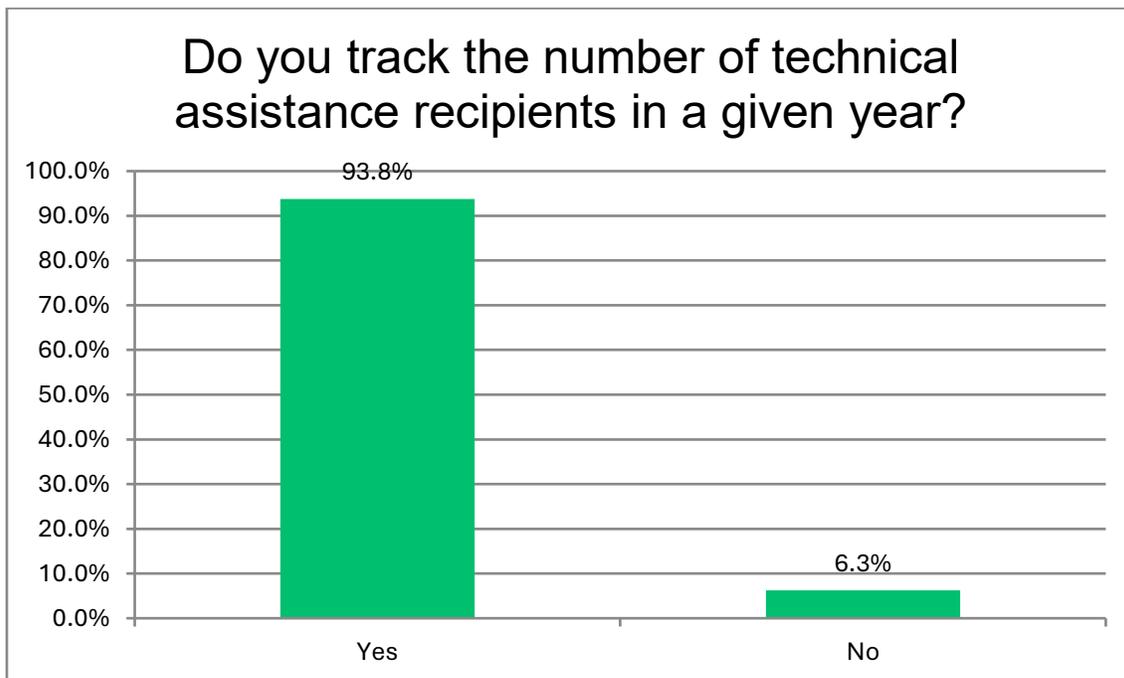
Responses:

- Percentage of clients able to purchase
- Business Plan Written, Financial Projections Completed, Marketing Plan Written, and other objectives as defined by our 4 courses (of Start Up, Finances, Marketing, and Management).

- We primarily track business starts and capital raised
- Filling gaps of programming not covered by other eco-system partners.

26) Do you track the number of technical assistance recipients in a given year? N=48

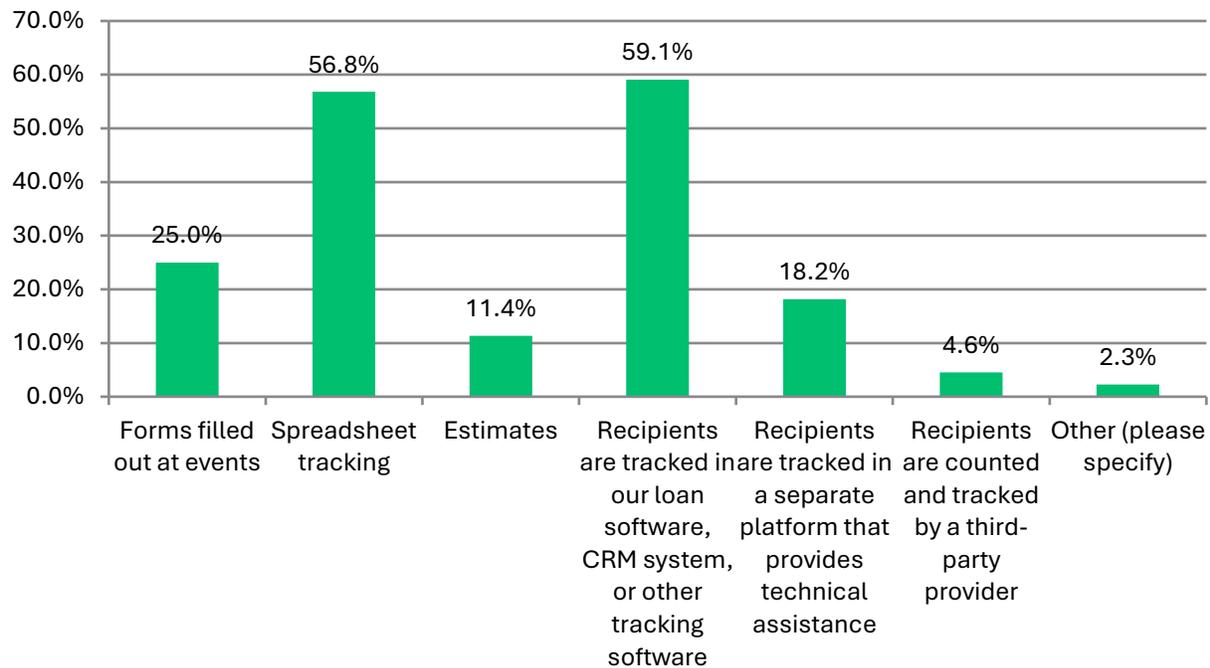
Key takeaway: The vast majority of respondents track the number of technical assistance recipients in a given year (93.8%).



27) How do you track the number of technical assistance recipients? (select all that apply) N=44

Key takeaways: Tracking happens in a range of formats, most commonly within a loan system or other software (59.1%), followed by spreadsheet tracking (56.8%). Many respondents identified multiple forms of tracking, given that responses add up to more than 100%.

How do you track the number of technical assistance recipients? (select all that apply)



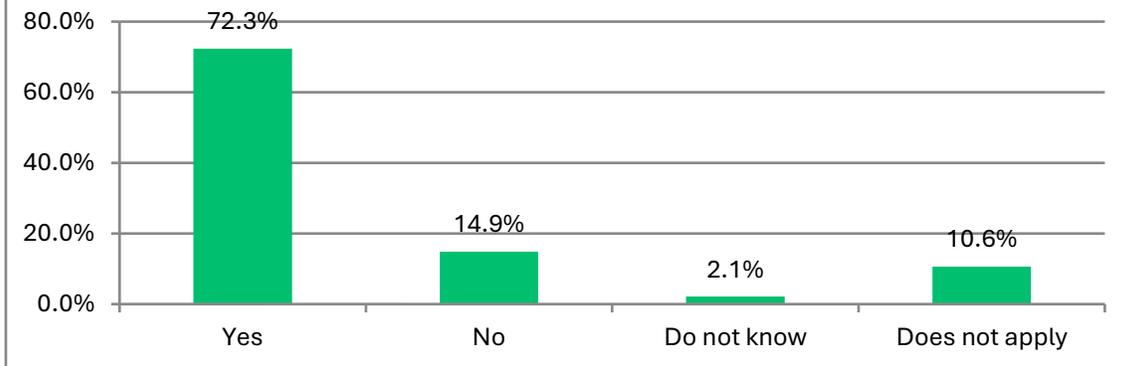
Responses:

- done as part of our time sheets

28) For technical assistance recipients that access technical assistance prior to submitting a loan application, do you track whether they access a loan from your organization? N=47

Key takeaway: Typically, respondents track if pre-loan technical assistance recipients go on to submit a loan application within their organization (72.3%).

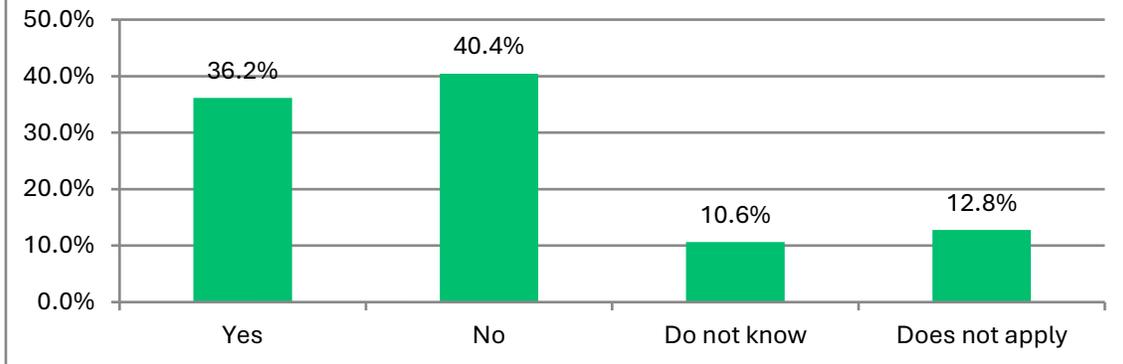
For technical assistance recipients that access technical assistance prior to submitting a loan application, do you track whether they access a loan from your organization?



29) For technical assistance recipients that access technical assistance prior to submitting a loan application, do you track how their initial loan request compares to the approved loan amount? N=47

Key takeaway: For those respondents that provide pre-loan technical assistance, there is some tracking of how their initial loan request compares to their approved loan amount (36.2%), but it is not the most common practice.

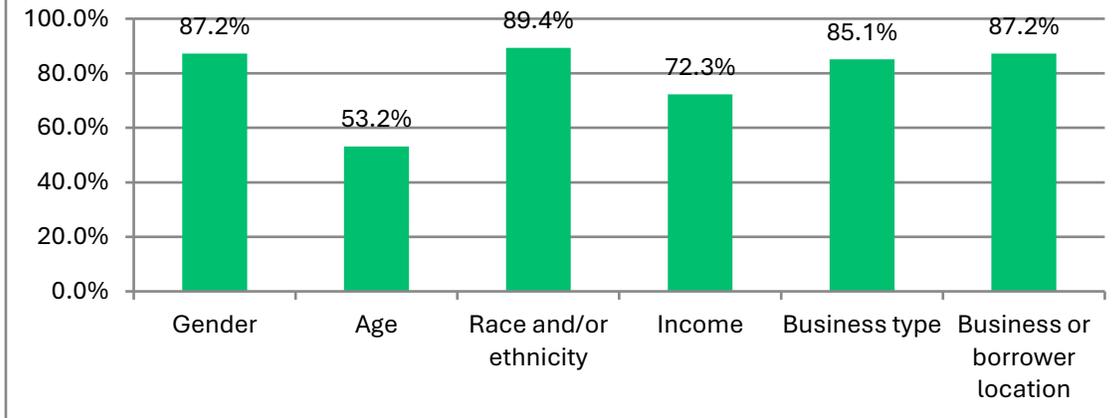
For technical assistance recipients that access technical assistance prior to submitting a loan application, do you track how their initial loan request compares to the approved loan amount?



30) Which, if any of the following, demographic data points do you collect from technical assistance recipients? Select all that apply. N=47

Key takeaway: Respondents collect a wide range of demographic data points on their technical assistance recipients, including race and/or ethnicity (89.4%), business or borrower location (87.2%), gender (87.2%), business type (85.1%), and income (72.3%). Of the surveyed demographic data points, age is less commonly collected (53.2%).

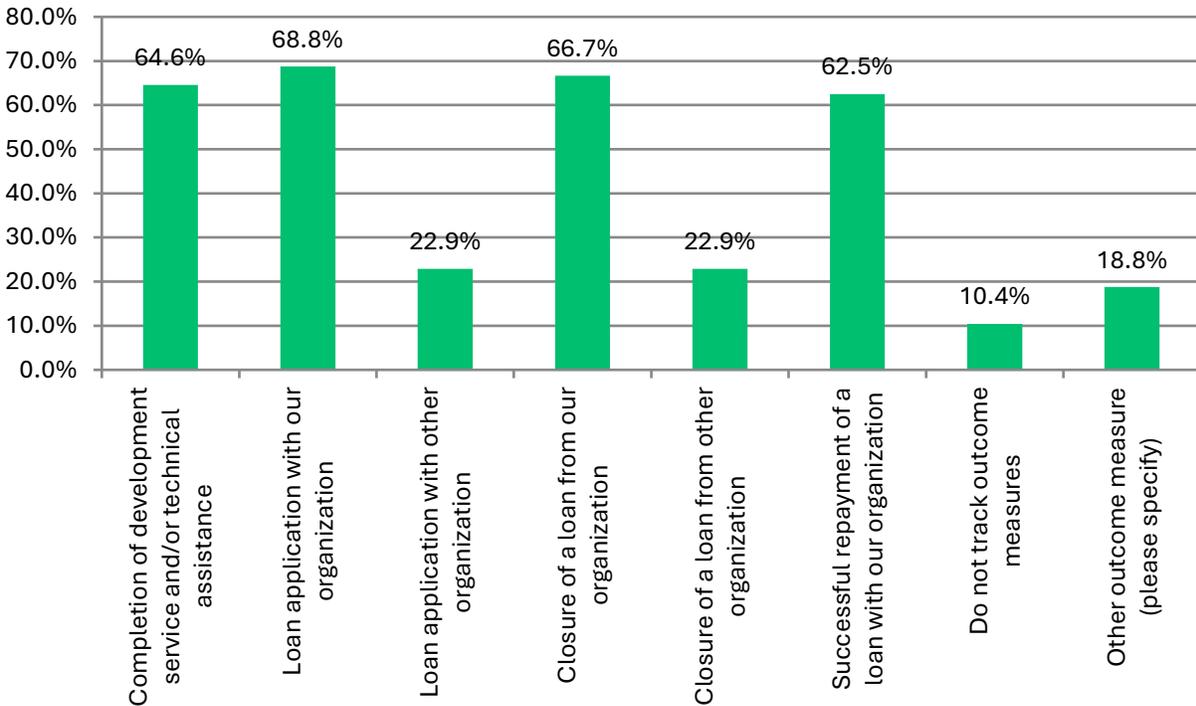
Which, if any of the following, demographic data points do you collect from technical assistance recipients?
Select all that apply.



31) Which, if any, of the following outcomes do you track related to technical assistance? Select all that apply. N=48

Key takeaways: The majority of respondents track some technical assistance outcomes, given that just 10.4% indicated that they do not track outcomes. Commonly tracked outcomes include a loan application within their organization (68.8%), a closed loan within their organization (66.7%), completion of technical assistance (64.6%), and successful loan repayment (62.5%).

Which, if any, of the following outcomes do you track related to technical assistance?
Select all that apply



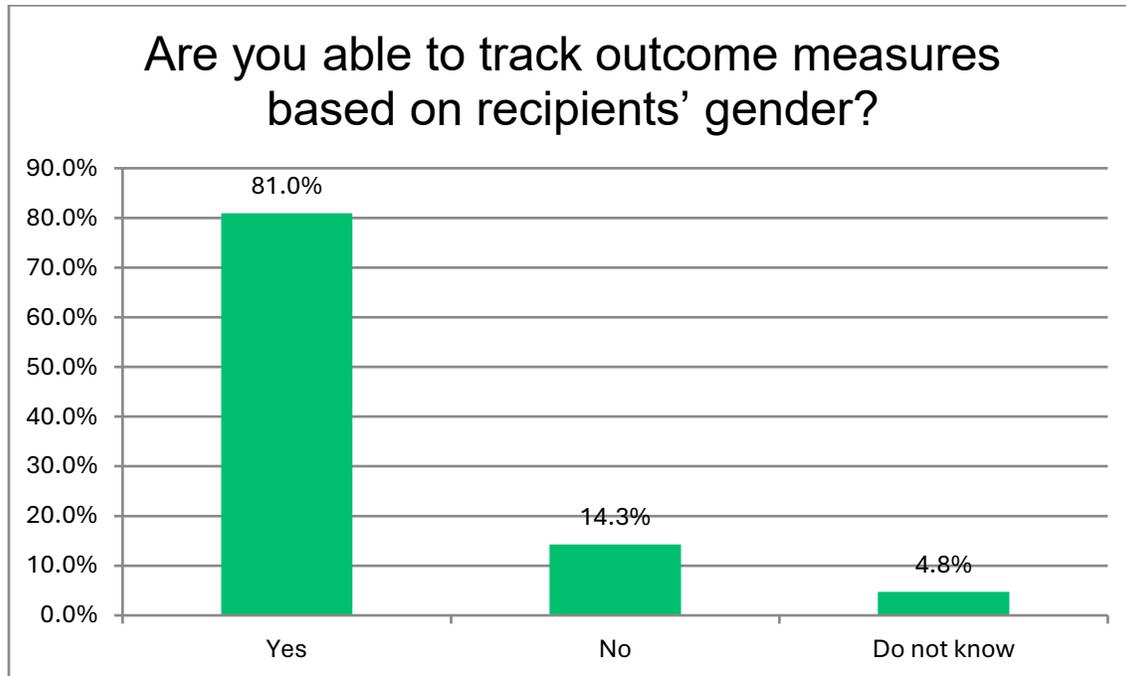
Responses:

- Business impact: growth and job creation
- business sustainability and ability to scale
- we do track it for training cohort
- Number of employees, new jobs created, jobs retained
- (outputs and some outcomes): Non-member to member conversion, % of 1:1 sessions to M/WBE, # Unique Businesses Served, Full Time Jobs + Part Time Jobs reported for TA clients, Business Development Workshop Totals, # Credit Report Reviews provided to Business Owners/Entrepreneurs, Course Objectives Completed, # Of New Enrollments, # of Courses Completed, Referrals to Lending, Referrals to New Accounts, Referrals to Financial Wellness, Referral Other, Resource Views (Initiate Prosperity), # of Clients Accessing Resources (Initiate Prosperity), Resource Views (Initiate Prosperity), # of Hours of Client Active Time (Initiate Prosperity)
- We track pre and post loan technical assistance.

- credit restoration progress
- Small business state change over time.
- number of jobs created/retained, revenue (gross and net)

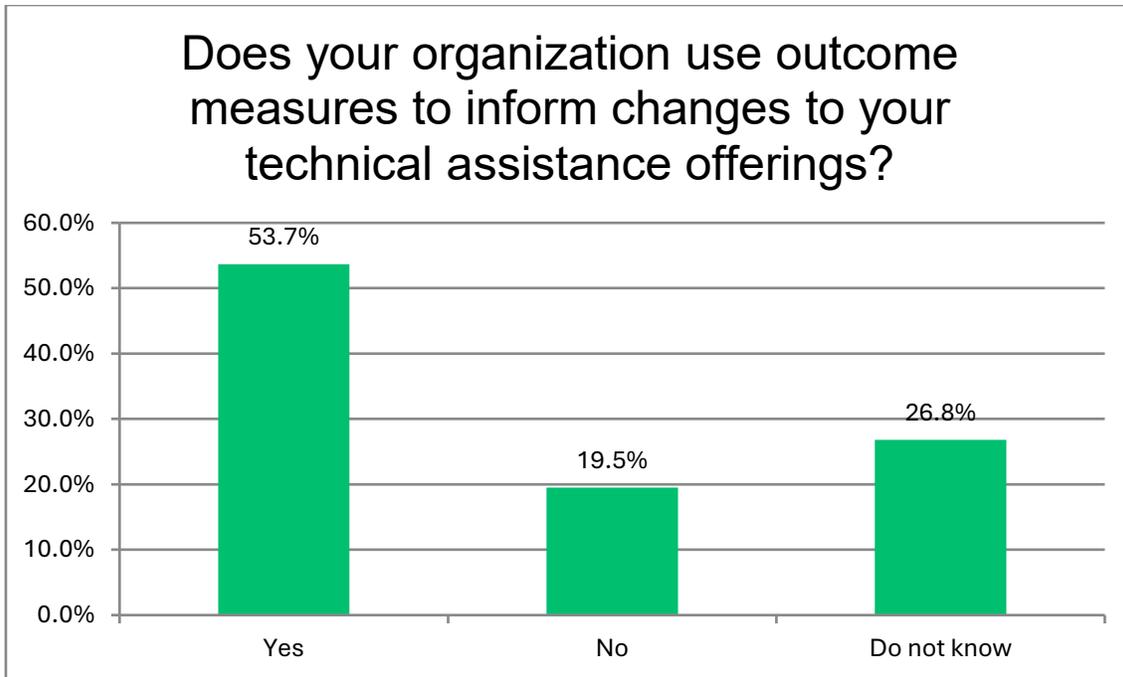
32) Are you able to track outcome measures based on recipients' gender? N=42

Key takeaway: Most organizations can track outcomes based on gender (81.0%).



33) Does your organization use outcome measures to inform changes to your technical assistance offerings? N=41

Key takeaway: More than half of respondents indicated they use outcomes to change their technical assistance offerings (53.7%), though a quarter indicated they were not sure if outcomes informed offerings (26.8%) and many indicated they do not (19.5%).



34) If yes, can you provide an example of such a change? N=13

Responses:

- We are redesigning our self-paced online courses to make them more accessible, with 5-20 minute modules, captions, etc.
- We've seen an increase in requests for technical assistance related to local food access - so producers wanting to sell locally or produce food products locally - so we developed the Food & Ag Development Center to provide that technical assistance, and sought out lending capital to assist that industry (USDA Meat & Poultry Intermediary Lender).
- A lot of funders care about business starts, but to us it is more important that the business stays in business, we've added a lot of programming around growth and market access, for example we provide training and access to an important wholesale trade show for new businesses, that might not have gone through the process previously.
- Yes, our organization uses outcome measures to inform changes to our technical assistance offerings. We regularly assess the effectiveness of our programs by tracking key performance indicators such as business growth, financial stability, access to capital, and

overall client satisfaction. By analyzing these outcomes, we identify areas for improvement and adjust our technical assistance services to better meet the evolving needs of our clients. This data-driven approach ensures that our support remains relevant, targeted, and impactful, helping us to continuously refine our offerings and maximize positive outcomes for the communities we serve.

- Number of jobs created and/or saved.
- Our program was re-launched in its current format in Feb 2025, so we are still in the early stages of this transition and really in an information gathering stage. We do expect that as we track activity, outputs, and outcomes, we will make changes to the program to lean into what's effective and useful for our clients and de-emphasize what's not. In Q1 2025, we've completed 65 1:1 TA sessions for 46 unique businesses. 80% of clients are women or minority owned businesses. Clients support 64 FT jobs (created or retained). In addition to 1:1 sessions we've tracked 133 hours of active time in our online educational platform, Initiate Prosperity, and over 800 resource views. We've had 17 new enrollments in the course, 4 course objectives completed, and 15 internal referrals for other products, programs or services (like accounts, lending, or financial ed). TA clients have borrowed approx. \$175,000 in micro or business loans, and 6 clients applied for local grant fund totaling over \$125K (those grants not yet awarded, but our TA staff supported those clients in applying for funds). We are working on better developing our systems for tracking results of internal and external referrals.
- Willingness to work with our TA staff immediately after loan closing is a key indicator. Responsiveness at this point is a leading indicator for later responsiveness as well as success paying back their loan. Therefore, we experiment with different methods to increase initial responsiveness.
- Reviewing outcomes over time based upon entrepreneur engagement, feedback, macro & micro economic factors plus impacts on industries, completion of required tasks, loan application volume, repayment performances, and any changes in existing TA partners/new partners.
- If clients are not reporting significant improvement in their knowledge or confidence in a topic presented in a workshop, we would review the content and delivery and look for opportunities to improve.

- Not possible to choose one, outcomes measurement's relation to TA services offered is a continuous improvement exercise
- We will adjust our workshop offerings based on the needs identified during assessments. For example, if we see a growing demand for education around digital marketing strategies or emerging technologies, we will develop new content and provide training tailored to those areas. This ensures our support stays relevant and impactful for business owners.
- We review surveys and adapt the customer journey maps according to feedback.
- Frequency of trainings. Subject matter taught.

35) Have your technical assistance programs changed due to any recent Executive Orders? N=39

Key takeaways: Most respondents did not indicate that their technical assistance programs had changed due to Executive Orders. The authors note that most responses were received prior to announcement of additional Executive Orders that specifically referenced the CDFI Fund and that the effects of signed Orders may have changed since the time the survey was completed.

Responses:

- no
- Not yet.
- No
- Not yet and would change in capacity based on funding
- No
- No
- absolutely
- no
- No
- No
- No, we are still offering the same services but are carefully watching trends.
- No
- yes
- Our technical assistance programs have not changed directly due to recent Executive Orders. However, we continue to monitor

developments in executive actions that could influence our approach. If any future orders align with the goals of our organization, we will assess and adjust our offerings accordingly to ensure they align with new priorities or regulations.

- No
- We have tweaked language but services have not changed
- No.
- No
- At this point, we have not made any changes.
- no
- No.
- No
- NO
- No
- No
- No.
- no
- N/A
- No
- Yes
- Maybe. Not yet.
- Yes. Our priority is to focus on organizations that have indicated a significant or critical reliance on federal funding for their programs and operations. We are staying closely connected with these borrowers, analyzing their financials and 2025 budgets as they become available. This will allow us to provide higher levels of TA as needed and potentially consider loan modifications, among other options.
- No
- not yet
- No
- No.
- no
- No
- No

36) Has your organization's positioning or focus changed due to any recent Executive Orders? N=39

Key takeaways: Most respondents did not indicate that their technical assistance programs had changed due to Executive Orders. The authors note that most responses were received prior to announcement of additional Executive Orders that specifically referenced the CDFI Fund and that the effects of signed Orders may have changed since the time the survey was completed.

Responses:

- no
- We have not changed our mission, but we have changed some of the ways we talk about it.
- All of our language is being gutted and changing the ways we the market the programs and loans. It feels like the primary focus is on survival of the organization rather than better serving our communities
- No
- No
- The focus hasn't changed, but the language we use to describe our services did.
- absolutely
- we are talking more about low income -underresourced
- Hell no
- No
- We are watching how and when tell our borrower success stories.
- We are in the process of evaluating the feasibility of continuing to operate if existing funding sources are eliminated or reduced. Such funding sources are CDFI, EPA Brownfields, and EDA. We are also internally discussing what types of technical assistance will need to be provided to clients who may be impacted by EO's and/or tariffs and how we will assist them if those impacts result in loss of income.
- we are complying with executive orders.
- Recent Executive Orders have influenced our organization's positioning and focus. For example, Executive Order 2025-012 promotes reshoring and strengthens manufacturing in Puerto Rico,

leading to initiatives aimed at attracting investment and improving infrastructure. Additionally, the Biden-Harris Administration has adopted a comprehensive approach to Puerto Rico's economic recovery, focusing on workforce development and diversifying the economy. These actions have prompted our organization to align its strategies with the evolving economic landscape, particularly in areas like workforce development and infrastructure improvement.

- No
- No
- No.
- No
- We continue to monitor, but we have not made any material changes to our core focus.
- no
- No.
- A lot of discussion has been had but no changes have been made.
- NO
- No
- No
- No.
- no
- N/A
- No
- Yes
- Had to deemphasize messaging around traditional CDFI target audiences of minority, women, and veteran-owned small businesses.
- Yes, to a certain extent. While we are being cautious in how we communicate about ourselves and our work—as an organization with a long-standing focus on racial and socioeconomic inequities—our core mission remains serving under-resourced communities and groups.
- No
- concerned about refugees and asylee's
- No
- No.
- no
- No

- No

37) Name: Redacted

38) Email address: Redacted

39) If there are any details of your CDFI's approach to technical assistance in relation to your approach or strategy to meeting the needs of recipients who are women, please share them here. N=7

Responses:

- The majority of staff are women. and 90% of staff who do TA are women, I've found that with that, we have a higher number of women. I don't think this was intentional, but women tend to be in those roles (the educator, nonprofit, etc)
- My nOrganization encouraged cottage industry businesses at our inception for the first 15 years or so. We haven't put any real effort into that space for quite awhile. perhaps we should reconsider with all the Federasl gov't job layoffs.
- We have a lot of programming specifically taking the needs of women into account. Our website has examples, ceimaine.org
- Our CDFI recognizes the unique challenges faced by women, particularly those from underserved communities, and has tailored our technical assistance approach to address these challenges effectively. We provide women entrepreneurs and community-based organizations with targeted support that includes business development, financial literacy, and access to resources that help them overcome barriers to success. Our strategy focuses on creating a supportive environment where women can build capacity, enhance their leadership skills, and improve their financial management practices. We also prioritize mentorship opportunities and networking, connecting women with other successful leaders and professionals in their fields. Additionally, our technical assistance programs are designed to be flexible and inclusive, ensuring that they meet the specific needs of women in various sectors, from microenterprise to larger-scale community development. By focusing on empowering women with the tools and knowledge they need, we aim to foster sustainable economic growth and increase the long-

term success of women-led businesses and organizations in the communities we serve.

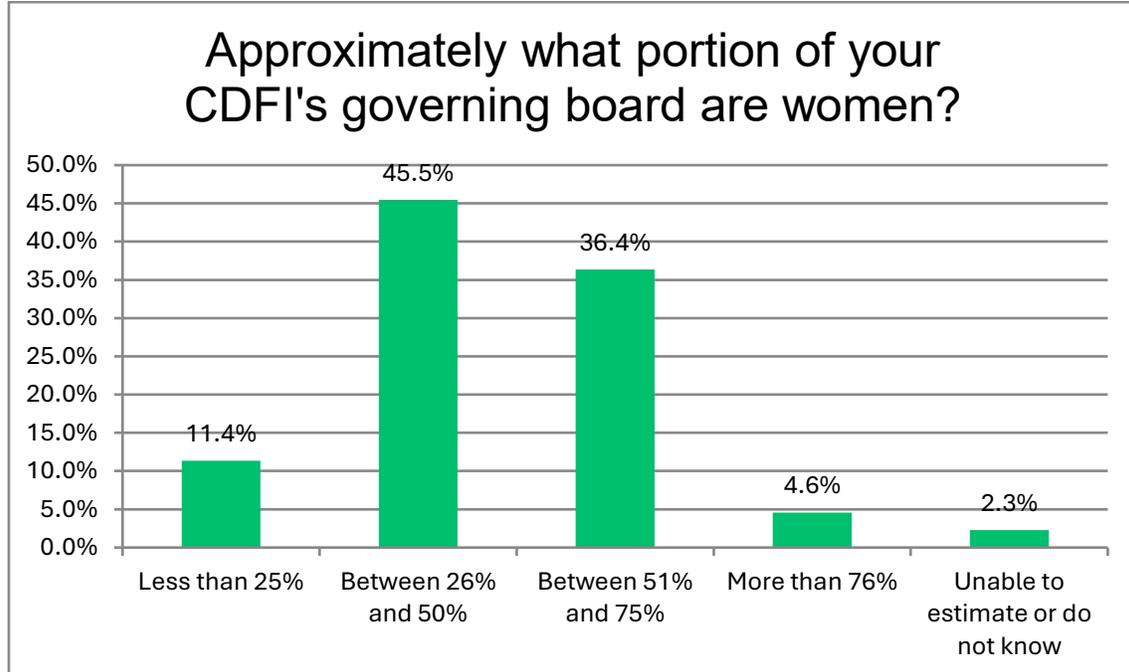
- "We have adopted more of a place based investing strategy in partnering with our CDC partners more for them to serve as the neighborhood business chambers who identify entrepreneurs and refer them to us, this allows us as a CDFI to serve more as an intermediary versus operating as a "catch all" for entrepreneurs purely seeking capital alternatives to banks.

As a result, we created a scoring matrix for identifying initial TA needs for each entrepreneur that allows us to custom tailor a plan for them based upon prioritizing gaps in knowledge base."

- TA is provided regardless of gender
- we think for the most the women do it more using a step process

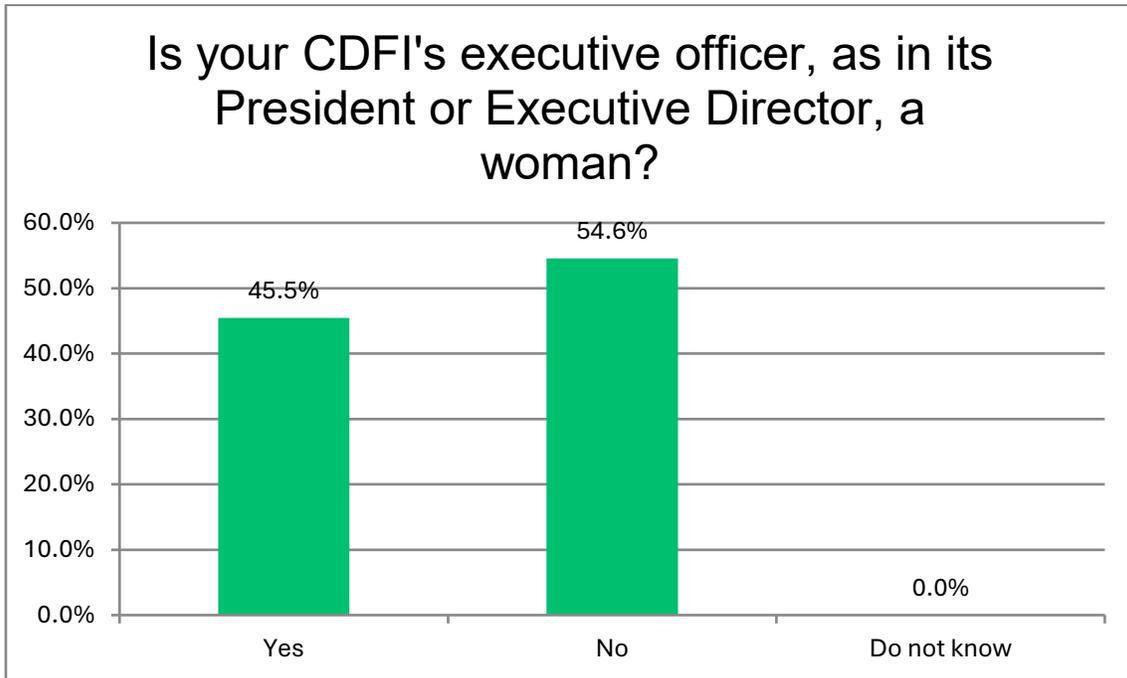
40) Approximately what portion of your CDFI's governing board are women? N=44

Key takeaway: Most commonly, women make up 26% to 50% of respondents' governing boards.



41) Is your CDFI's executive officer, as in its President or Executive Director, a woman?
N=44

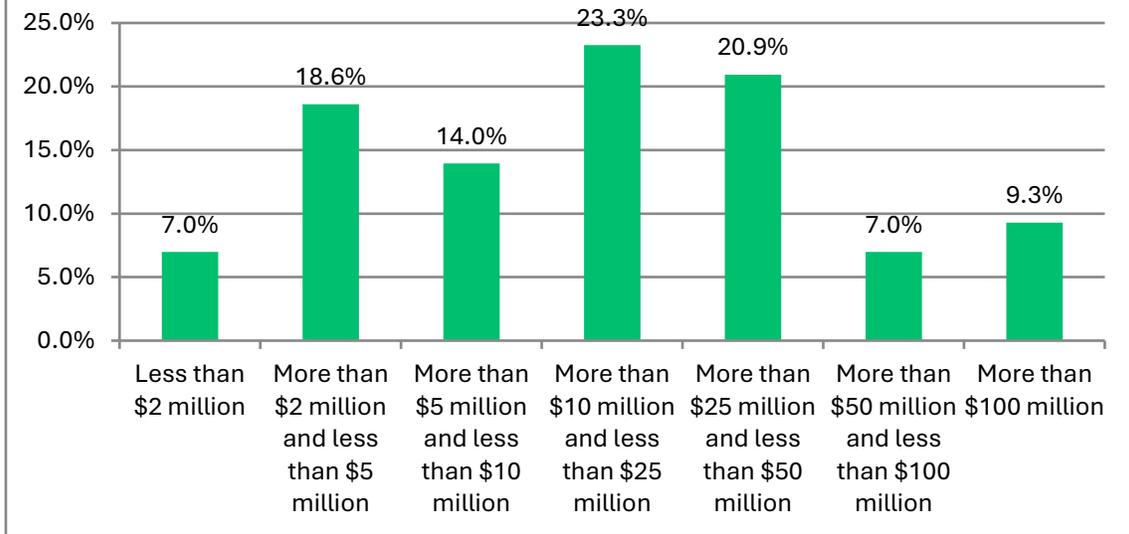
Key takeaway: Generally, respondents' executive office is not a woman (54.6%).



42) As of your most recent fiscal year end, what was your asset size? N=43

Key takeaways: Respondents represent a range of organizational sizes, based on asset size. Most commonly, respondent organizations have between \$10MM and \$25MM in assets.

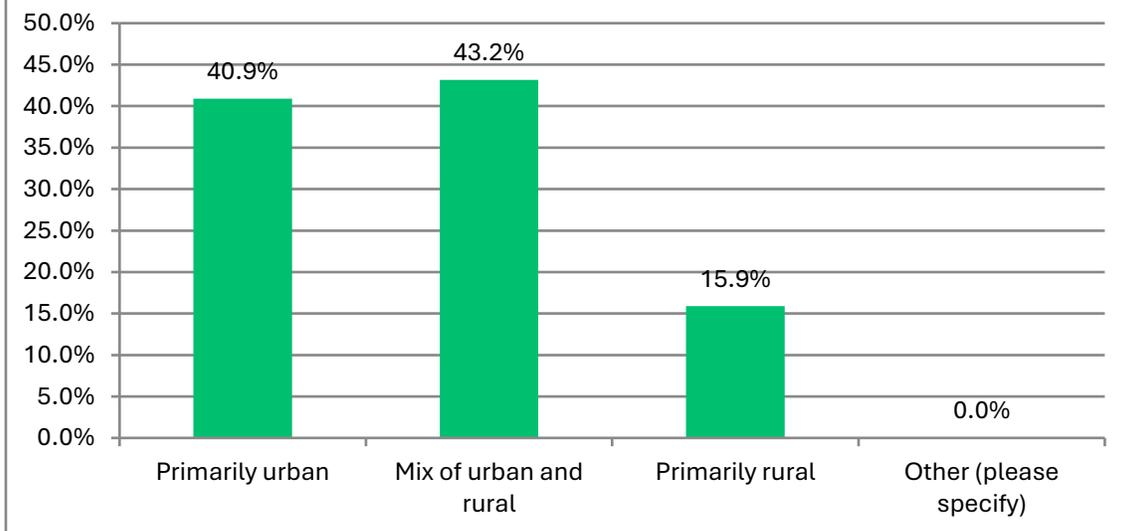
As of your most recent fiscal year end, what was your asset size?



43) How would you describe the geographic focus of your organization? N=44

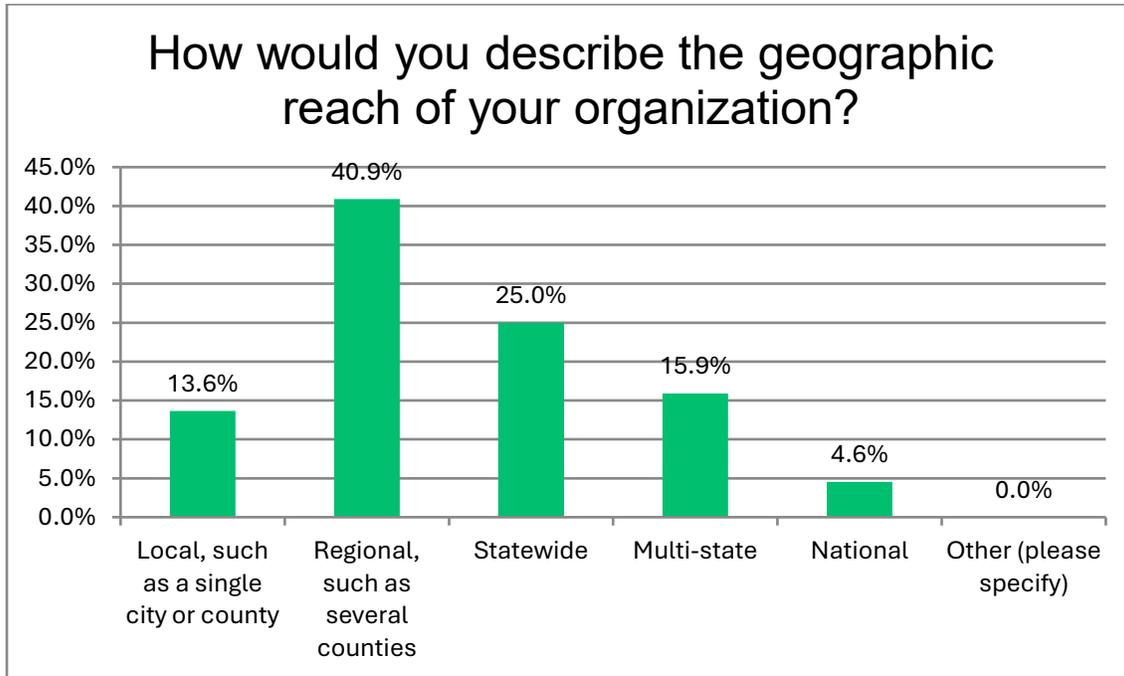
Key takeaway: Respondents represent a range of geographic foci, including primarily urban (40.9%), mix of urban and rural (43.2%) and primarily rural (15.9%).

How would you describe the geographic focus of your organization?



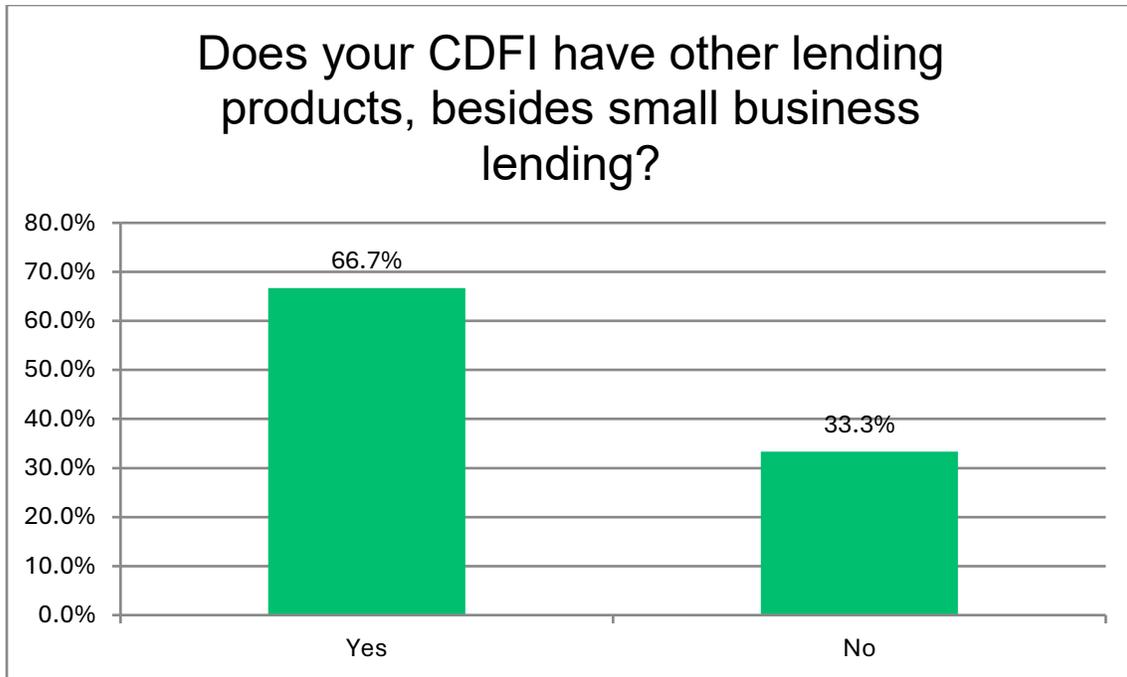
44) How would you describe the geographic reach of your organization? N=44

Key takeaway: Respondents are generally regional in reach (40.9%), though there was representation from other geographic reaches amongst the respondent pool.



45) Does your CDFI have other lending products, besides small business lending? N=45

Key takeaways: Respondents typically provide a range of lending products, besides small business lending (66.7%).

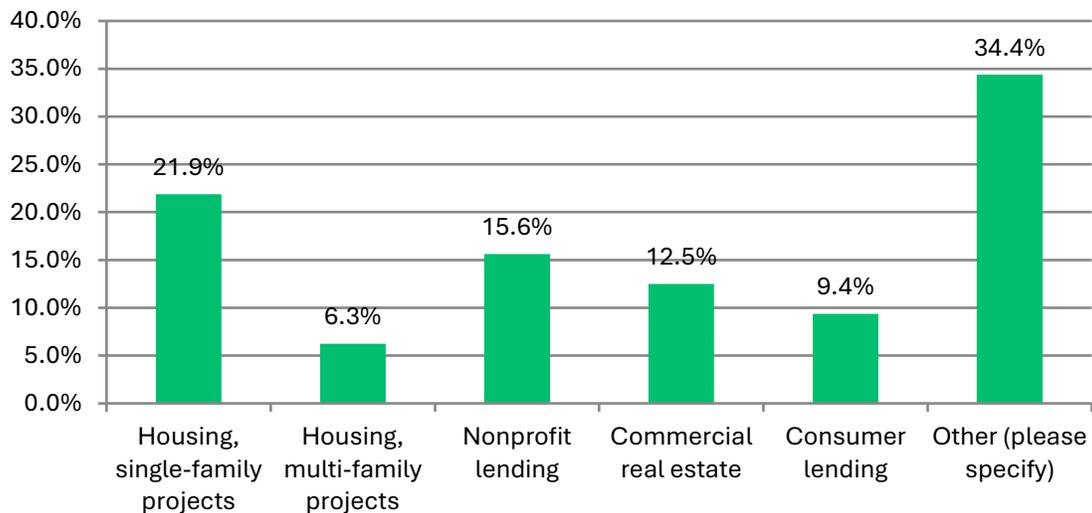


Note: Question 46 was only asked for those that responded Yes to Question 45, indicating that they provide other lending products in addition to small business lending.

46) If yes, what other lending products does your CDFI offer? N=32

Key takeaway: Housing, nonprofit and commercial lending are all common additional lending products for respondent organizations.

If yes, what other lending products does your CDFI offer?



Responses:

- Incentive matched savings
- EPA Brownfields redevelopment
- it wouldn't let me chose more than one, so community facilities (non profit) commercial real estate, developers of affordable housing
- Consumer, Mortgages, Commercial Real Estate, Nonprofit lending
- Nonprofit lending, owner occupied commercial real estate
- CRE, Affordable Multi-family, Energy Efficiency, CPACE
- Intermediary lending
- Private equity investment
- Housing, multi-family projects, nonprofit lending, commercial real estate
- we are helping businesses buy owner occupied properties
- All of the above

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Introduction: FUND Community Institute is conducting a research project to better understand CDFI's technical assistance programming, with a particular focus on ways gender may or may not play a role in the provision of or outcomes of technical assistance. We will be going through a series of questions to explore these themes. All responses here will be anonymized unless specific permission to associate the CDFI name or person interviewed with the information.

Introductory questions:

- Please introduce your CDFI including your mission and products offered.
- What topics do you provide technical assistance on?
 - Are there ways that your technical assistance programming has changed within the last three to five years?
 - What do you expect technical assistance to look like in the next five years? What additional advancements do you hope to make?

Understanding Programming

- We are interested in exploring how CDFIs identify what technical assistance is offered in addition to how it is provided. Can you please describe the process for how technical assistance offerings are determined for potential recipients?
 - When does this determination take place? For example, is there an initial assessment, check ins at certain stages of the relationship etc.?
- Are there ways that technology is used to assess, track or provide technical assistance? If so, please describe.
- Can you please describe your CDFIs process for tracking technical assistance?
 - Does your current process meet your needs or is there additional data you would like to track?
 - Do you use the data to update or change your technical assistance or other offerings?

Exploring potential gender-based differences

Our project includes exploring technical assistance trends based on the gender of the recipient so the next series of questions asks about potential gender-based differences that may or may not apply to your organization.

- Does your CDFI have a focus on serving women, through products, services etc.?
 - If so, how does your organization focus on women?
 - What is the impetus for this focus?

- Do women access your technical assistance in different ways than men? Additional prompt: This may include how frequently they access it, trends in programming, etc.
 - If yes, what factors do you think influence this?
- How does your CDFI identify or otherwise reach potential technical assistance recipients?
 - Do you use different strategies to reach women?
 - If so, do you feel those strategies have been successful?
- What are the most successful strategies your organization uses when providing technical assistance?
 - Have there been different strategies when offering technical assistance to women?
- Do women access your credit or loan products in different ways than men? Additional prompt: This may include how frequency, funding request, type of product etc.
 - If yes, what factors do you think influence this?

Concluding Questions

- In the next phase of our research, we will be collecting technical assistance and lending data from CDFIs to analyze outcomes, such as how rates of accessing technical assistance compare to rates of accessing loans and other outcomes measures the CDFI may be able to track. Would you be interested in providing your data for this phase of the project?
- Is there anything else you would like to share before we conclude the interview?

Thank you for your time.