



CDFI CERTIFICATION

YOUR GATEWAY

to the CDFI **COMMUNITY**

Providing access to affordable financial products and services in underserved communities is a vital part of the CDFI Fund's mission. By building the capacity of a nation-wide network of specialized financial institutions serving economically distressed communities, low-income people are empowered to enter the financial mainstream. The community-based organizations that make this possible are called Community Development Financial Institutions—or CDFIs—and they are dedicated to serving market niches that are often underserved by traditional financial institutions. The first step to utilizing many of the CDFI Fund's programs is CDFI Certification.

WHAT IS CDFI CERTIFICATION?

CDFI Certification is the U.S. Department of the Treasury's recognition of specialized financial institutions serving low-income communities. CDFI Certification opens the door to opportunities for CDFIs to excel—both operationally and financially. Through Certification, CDFIs are qualified to apply for technical assistance and financial assistance awards, as well as training provided by the CDFI Fund through the Capacity Building Initiative.

WHAT ORGANIZATIONS ARE ELIGIBLE FOR CERTIFICATION?

While all CDFIs have a primary mission of serving low-income individuals and communities, they can take several forms, including:

- Banks—For-profit corporations providing capital to rebuild economically distressed communities through targeted lending and investments
- Credit Unions—Member-owned non-profit cooperatives promoting savings, affordable loans, and other financial services
- Loan Funds—Typically non-profit organizations providing financing and technical assistance to small businesses, microenterprises, affordable housing developers, and community service organizations
- Venture Capital Funds—Organizations providing equity and debt-with-equity services to businesses in distressed communities

Many certified CDFIs offer loans that are more favorable and flexible than traditional lenders. In accordance with their mission, certified CDFIs also provide educational services like business planning, credit counseling, and homebuyer classes to help their borrowers use credit effectively.

HOW DOES AN ORGANIZATION OBTAIN CDFI CERTIFICATION?

To become a certified CDFI, you need to meet the eligibility requirements and submit an application.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for CDFI Certification, an organization must meet the following criteria:

- Have a primary mission of promoting community development
- Provide both financial and educational services
- Serve and maintain accountability to one or more defined target markets
- Maintain accountability to a defined market
- Be a legal, non-governmental entity at the time of application (with the exception of Tribal governmental entities)

APPLICATION GUIDELINES

- Apply Anytime. We accept applications year-round; there is no deadline.
- Save Money. There is no application fee.
- Let Us Help You. We offer Frequently Asked Questions and tip sheets online, as well as monthly Certification conference calls and Help Desk staff you may contact by phone.

FIND OUT MORE

Visit our website and apply: www.cdfifund.gov/cdficert

Sit in on a CDFI Certification Conference Call

Call our help desk for support: (202) 653-0421

Email us your questions: cdfihelp@cdfi.treas.gov