

News Release | July 1, 2021

Minority-Owned Small Businesses in Appalachian Communities Continue Recovery with \$3 Million in Grants from Wells Fargo

Grants to provide access to capital and technical assistance for underserved entrepreneurs in rural communities hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic

Charlotte, N.C. — July 1, 2021—Wells Fargo today announced \$3 million in grants to Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) to help underserved small businesses in rural and Southern Appalachian communities manage the economic effects of COVID-19. Wells Fargo has selected Appalachian Community Capital Development (ACC), Carolina Small Business Development Fund (CSBDF) and Natural Capital Investment Fund (NCIFund) to join the Open for Business Fund, a nationwide small business recovery effort. The funding will help increase access to capital with low rate loans for minority-owned businesses in rural communities across Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina and West Virginia.

The [Open for Business Fund](#) is a roughly \$420 million small business recovery effort across the U.S. to help entrepreneurs recover and rebuild. The initiative focuses on three key areas: increasing access to capital through CDFIs, technical assistance, and long-term recovery and resiliency programs.

“The Open for Business Fund enlists the expertise of organizations like ACC, Carolina Small Business Development Fund and NCIFund to urgently assist small business owners with capital and technical assistance so they can preserve local jobs in some of the most negatively impacted communities,” said Juan Austin, Community Relations senior manager for Wells Fargo. “By working with these organizations and other CDFIs, we can ensure that local minority-owned small businesses receive the resources they need to keep their businesses open.”

Funding four Black-led CDFIs across the Southeast

The Open for Business Fund grant to [Appalachian Community Capital](#), a CDFI intermediary with more than 20 members serving Appalachia, will support four Black-led CDFIs. Piedmont Business Capital in North Carolina, Albany Community Together, Inc. (ACT!) in Georgia, Bronze Valley in Alabama, and Small Business Capital Fund of MS, Inc., in Mississippi, will each receive \$75,000 for lending capital and/or convertible notes; \$75,000 for operating capital, including loan loss reserves; and \$50,000 to be used as grants to Black/African American owned businesses.

“We’re excited to be one of Wells Fargo’s Open for Business grant recipients,” said Donna Gambrell, President and CEO of Appalachian Community Capital. “The funds will boost ACC’s efforts to serve diverse communities and small business owners in the Appalachian Region, particularly minority-owned small businesses that have been hard hit by COVID-19.”

Supporting underserved entrepreneurs, including minorities, veterans, lower income individuals and firms in rural communities throughout North Carolina

[Carolina Small Business Development Fund](#) will use the funds to provide low-interest loans, ranging from \$2,500 to \$75,000 to small businesses for working capital and equipment purchases. Applicants will also be eligible for free technical assistance from CSBDF’s Business Solutions Team.

“CSBDF’s mission is to drive economic development in North Carolina through service to small businesses,” said Kevin Dick, CSBDF President and CEO. “By utilizing the grant from Wells Fargo, we will be able to pursue our mission in a flexible and comprehensive

way throughout the State of North Carolina. Wells Fargo has once again stepped up for businesses in underserved communities through its investment in CSBDF.”

Serving businesses owned by Black entrepreneurs in rural and economically disadvantaged communities in North Carolina and West Virginia

Natural Capital Investment Fund will use the grant to launch the Building Equity (BE) Fund to rapidly deliver capital and high quality wrap around technical assistance to borrowers.

“Natural Capital Investment Fund will deploy the Building Equity Fund to deliver affordable capital and help Black-owned businesses increase their equity,” said Marten Jenkins, NCIFund CEO. “We couldn’t pursue this new approach without Wells Fargo’s support, and we’re grateful for the opportunity to deepen our commitment to serving disadvantaged entrepreneurs.”

In 2020, Wells Fargo’s local giving in North Carolina, West Virginia, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi also included donating more than \$38 million to fund nonprofits that are focused on providing capital, technical assistance and networks of support for entrepreneurs.

About Wells Fargo

Wells Fargo & Company is a leading financial services company that has approximately \$1.9 trillion in assets and proudly serves one in three U.S. households and more than 10% of all middle market companies and small businesses in the U.S. We provide a diversified set of banking, investment and mortgage products and services, as well as consumer and commercial finance, through our four reportable operating segments: Consumer Banking and Lending, Commercial Banking, Corporate and Investment Banking, and Wealth and Investment Management. Wells Fargo ranked No. 30 on Fortune’s 2020 rankings of America’s largest corporations. In the communities we serve, the company focuses its social impact on building a sustainable, inclusive future for all by supporting housing affordability, small business growth, financial health and a low-carbon economy. News, insights and perspectives from Wells Fargo are also available at [Wells Fargo Stories](#).

Additional information may be found at www.wellsfargo.com | Twitter: [@WellsFargo](#).

About Appalachian Community Capital

Appalachian Community Capital is a CDFI lending intermediary created to raise capital for its 24 member CDFIs, which in turn, fund small businesses and entrepreneurs in underserved areas in Appalachia. The members, many of whom have been operating for more than 20 years, and their affiliates manage over \$1 billion in assets supporting economic development in Appalachia.

About Carolina Small Business Development Fund

Founded in 1990, Carolina Small Business Development Fund fosters economic development in underserved communities through access to capital, business services, and policy research. Since 2010, the nonprofit CDFI has invested over \$70 million through over 1,000 loans to small businesses across North Carolina helping to create or retain more than 4,100 full-time jobs. For more information, visit www.carolinasmallbusiness.org.

About Natural Capital Investment Fund

Natural Capital Investment Fund lends to and supports enterprises that promote a healthy environment and healthy families in Central Appalachia and the Southeast. NCIFund has invested \$95M in 550 enterprises that have created or retained over 7,000 jobs, primarily for low and moderate income individuals. Over ½ of the businesses we support are owned by people of color or women, and over 85% are in rural or underserved communities. NCIFund believes capital alone is not enough to provide the economic boost these communities deserve. So, the Fund provides 4,000 hours of technical assistance annually to prospective borrowers and

portfolio companies, making sure they are well-equipped to make the best use of NCIFund's loan capital. The fund meets its mission as a certified community development financial institution (CDFI) by supporting a range of triple-bottom-line enterprises that promote equity, protect the environment, and grow the economy. NCIFund has been a proud participant in Wells Fargo's Diverse Community Capital Program since 2015.

Media Contact

Josh Dunn, 704-957-7534

josh.dunn@wellsfargo.com

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