

# CDFI Innovations in Improving Access to Small-Dollar Credit

## Speaker Biographies

**Dan Apfel** is the CEO at Genesee Co-op Federal Credit Union, a \$45 million CDFI credit union with over 4,500 members in Rochester, NY. Dan has been involved with Community Development Credit Unions for 15 years: he worked as a Program Officer at Inclusiv from 2007-2009, and served on the boards of Alternatives Federal Credit Union (2017-2018) and Alternatives' affiliated non-profit organizations (2014-2018). Before joining Genesee Co-op in 2018, Dan was Senior Associate at Croatan Institute, a consultant to foundations and non-profits, and executive director of the Responsible Endowments Coalition (REC). Dan's campaigns and initiatives led to a major shift towards responsible investing in the endowment space. Dan has a BA from University of Rochester and MPA from the Maxwell School at Syracuse University. Dan also serves on the board of Alianza Agricola, an immigrant farmworker justice organization, on Inclusiv's Government Affairs Committee, and on the University of Rochester's Ethical Endowment Advisory Committee.

**Amanda Hermans** is a research associate in the Center for Local Finance and Growth at the Urban Institute. Her research focuses on community economic development and finance, federal infrastructure policy, place-based investment, and local capacity. She also studies disability measurement. She is a lead researcher on Urban's [Infrastructure Equity](#) team. Previously, Hermans worked for The Lab @ DC, a scientific research team in the District of Columbia Mayor's administration, where she used evidence-based research and civic design practices to evaluate and improve the District's housing and transit programs. Hermans has a bachelor's degree in journalism and international studies from Northwestern University and a Master of Public Policy degree from American University.

**Nick Mitchell-Bennett** is the CEO of cdcB and the Managing Partner of the RGV Multibank. During his tenure he has led the cdcB team, in the development of over 4,000 homes. Nick led the RGVMB to be the first CDFI to join the Federal Home Loan Bank of Dallas. In 2011, the RGVMB launched the Community Loan Center. Nick has a BA from Tabor College, MS Degree from Eastern University, a Housing Development Finance Professional certification and has completed The Achieving Excellence Program. In 2015 Nick was recognized with the Texas Houser of the Year Award.

**Ines Polonius** is CEO of Communities Unlimited, Inc., a CDFI and Rural Development Hub serving the rural South. Communities Unlimited (CU)'s team of over 115 full time professionals works side-by-side with local leaders to create fair access to resources needed to sustain healthy communities, healthy businesses, and healthy families. CU resides in the solutions space, providing a holistic approach to community economic development that includes direct assistance and capital to community leadership teams tackling issues of rural housing, healthy foods and broadband, as well as direct assistance to micro-enterprises and small businesses as well as water and wastewater systems in persistently poor rural places across Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Alabama and Tennessee. In 1998, Ines founded alt.Consulting, dedicated to starting, growing, transitioning and turning around micro-enterprises and small businesses in the rural Arkansas Delta until a successful merger with Community Resource Group in 2014 formed Communities Unlimited, Inc. Ines earned an MBA and an MA in Economics from Boston University and received her undergraduate degree from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service.

Today, Ines is the board chair of the Association for Enterprise Opportunity (AEO), serves on the board of directors of the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP). She is a 2017 BALLE Fellow, a 2022 RWJF Interdisciplinary Research Leader, and an active member of the Partners for Rural Transformation.

**Paul Quintero** leads Ascendus, a nonprofit, small business loan fund whose vision is to create financial ascension for all. We support an entrepreneur's financial journey through inclusive financial solutions, one-on-one support, and longitudinal impact measures over the life of a loan. The board appointed Paul as CEO in 2011. Since then, Ascendus scaled annual dollar lending twelve times, from \$5 million in 2011 to \$60 million in 2023. From 2011 through 2024, Ascendus lent \$295 million to over 15,000 clients. Paul achieved these outcomes through a team focused on thought leadership, people development, consistency, collaboration, quality, innovation, and productivity.

**Brett Theodos** is the director of the Center for Local Finance and Growth at the Urban Institute. He is a leading researcher in mission finance, small business outcomes, place-based development, and wealth building tools. Theodos is regularly called upon by practitioners and policymakers to inform how to better expand prosperity in the US. Theodos serves on the board of directors with the Center for Community Progress, the Douglass Community Land Trust, Grounded Solutions Network, and the Housing Authority of Prince George's County, Maryland. Theodos received his BA from Northwestern University, MPP from Georgetown University, and PhD in public policy from the George Washington University.