Welcome, everyone, to OFN's 28th Annual Conference. Thank you for investing your time and resources to be here with us. It means a lot to OFN, to your peers, and to me, personally, that you chose to be part of this Conference.

I want to tell you, though, that I know you didn't get here on your own.

I learned through a secretly recorded video OFN obtained via former President Carter's third cousin, twice-removed, that 47% of you did not take personal responsibility for your decision to be here. You are dependents.

And you didn’t build this Conference!

No, in fact, with input from many of you, OFN’s Conference Team designed this week to give you time to do business, make friends, and strengthen your CDFI for the year ahead.

Please give a warm round of appreciation to Donna Fabiani and the OFN staff who worked so hard all year long to make this Conference a great experience for you.

Believe it or not, even while they are here in the room with us, a sliver of their minds is already thinking about the 2013 OFN Conference in Philadelphia.

I want to ask OFN Board Members to stand and ask everyone’s help in saying thanks to them. They provide OFN with vision, wisdom, and stability—and good governance. I know you share my deepest appreciation for all of them.

All of us are grateful to our sponsors—all 25 of them, but most of all our Lead Sponsor—Bank of America—and our Gold Sponsors—BBVA Compass, Citi, Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses, and Wells Fargo.

Finally, I want to let our Texas co-hosts know how proud OFN is to be here with them and because of them. Like most places, Texas has its own CDFI character—as well as its own CDFI characters! Let’s meet them and thank them.

I am very, very happy to be back in Texas, where anything is possible. The unbelievable is
possible. The unlikely is possible. Even the impossible is possible.

I am a Texan ... by marriage. My mother-in-law hails from Odessa-Midland, the iconic West Texas twin cities known for oil wildcatters, Friday Night Lights, both Presidents Bush, and a searing disdain for groups like the Tea Party that they consider too liberal.

My father-in-law, may he rest in peace, was the son of a frontier dentist in El Paso. Every summer, growing up, he spent at a family cabin—a shack, really—along the Eagle Creek outside of Ruidoso, New Mexico.

Ruidoso today is a vacation destination with lots of suburban homes. But there is nothing suburban about the 20 cabins in Eagle Creek Canyon. They added indoor plumbing about 30 years ago, but they kept the outhouses, too.

My wife and I got married in Ruidoso 28 years ago. Some people called it wedding camp. I was expecting Hatfields and McCoys.

I wish I could describe in full detail what happened at our wedding reception when the West Texans started to dance the Salty Dog—a strolling partner dance with a two-step hop—and the liberal, east coast Jews rushed to join in. That day we danced a very Salty Hora.

That proved to me that there are times when we can all rise above conflicts, no matter our cultural, political, ideological, or dance-style differences.

I realized that sometimes, in the right circumstances, the impossible is possible.

I think about that lesson often, because CDFIs do things that others believe are impossible. You leave the “possible” for others.
Eagle Creek is in Lincoln National Forest, home to Smokey Bear, who taught that “only you can prevent forest fires.”

In June this year, the ironically named “Little Bear” fire raced up Eagle Creek and down the canyon walls, converging on the cabins.

The canyon was scorched and barren. There was little left standing in Eagle Creek Canyon. The blaze consumed the outhouses and woodpiles just yards from the shacks. The flames licked at the eaves of the cabins. Impossibly, all but two of the cabins were unharmed—including ours.

But the landscape of Eagle Creek Canyon had changed permanently and life there will never be the same.

The CDFI landscape seems not so different from what happened in Eagle Creek: the world around us has changed forever over the past four or five years since another bear, Bear Stearns, went up in flames.

Many of the people we exist to serve were burned by irresponsible financial markets. The communities we care about were scorched by the economic fallout. Some of the public and private funding we have used to good results has gone up in smoke. Policy is engulfed in partisan politics that are hotter than ever. Our partners and allies are dealing with backdrafts of their own. And we have lost some of our own—a small number of CDFIs have burned to the ground.

Yet the CDFI industry is still standing. We are stronger than we could have expected and more resilient than almost anyone thought possible. More and more people and institutions in the mainstream see us as a reason for hope in a scorched landscape and as solutions that bridge insufficient resources to overwhelming need.

Looking forward with sadness and determination, CDFIs understand what we can and cannot do. And yet you see promise where others see peril—hopeful green sprouts of potential emerging in your communities.

You see people who want nothing more—or less—than an opportunity:

- Small business owners who will never give in;
- Housing developers hard at work salvaging communities;
- Nonprofit leaders doing more with less;
- Investors looking for impact;
- Corporations using their scale for good; and
- Policymakers seeking a new way forward.

Around us, with a growing number of CDFI partners and allies, you are cultivating a social and economic environment in which opportunities will grow, thrive, and spread.
How you do that in this landscape will be new; why you do it will never change.

Strategy, most simply, is knowing what is core and must never change versus what MUST change to move us forward.

So that is what I am going to talk about today, in four parts:

First: what the CDFI industry is working to achieve over the long term--why we exist: to align capital with justice.

Second: what it will take to achieve that purpose...Our industry's strategy, which OFN describes as “Coverage.”

Third: in support of that strategy, several of the most important things OFN will do in brand marketing, capacity building, financing, and policy.

Fourth: what OFN is asking each of you to do. I am going to make five Calls to Action today because, remember, only YOU can prevent social, economic, and political injustice!

Eight years ago I spoke to you in Chicago about CDFI industry strategy. We talked about the need to grow, change, or die.

Grow, change, or die remains the key to any strategy, but CDFIs enter this new period in a much different position and in a very different operating environment.

We have stepped up onto the next stage of CDFI strategy. We no longer are simply lead players in community productions. We now have important speaking roles in a much bigger drama about the future of our nation's economy, the direction of its policy, the role of its financial services industry, the resilience of our communities, and the power of values in commerce.

We are more relevant, more visible, and more ambitious. Our market and policy opportunities are more numerous. Our reputational risks are more varied and bigger.

And if we are going to call our work a success 10 or 15 years from now, we must reach many, many more people and communities.

In my office in Philadelphia, hanging over my desk, is a map showing the location of approximately 200 CDFIs in February 1993—ALL the CDFIs we could stretch to identify at the time. If you made a loan once, we counted you.
Those 200 CDFIs managed about $2 billion and loaned perhaps $300 million a year.

I made the map with help late into the night on February 1st, 1993. The next morning we took it to Washington, DC, for an “Introduction to CDFIs” briefing in the Senate right as Congress started work on what would become the CDFI Fund.

We did not know if 20 or 200 people would attend our briefing.

We did know that the one thing we wanted them to take away was the knowledge that CDFIs already were working in communities across the U.S.

Why start from scratch when policy could build on what CDFIs were already doing?

Our greatest fear at the time was that the Clinton White House and Congress would overlook us and invent something new that would be, to us, CDFIs in name only.

As it turned out, most of the 300-plus briefing attendees cared more about that sloppy map than about the nuances of CDFI lending. They all wanted to know one thing: is there a CDFI in my district or state?

We believed, correctly it turned out, that our experience and practice would give us standing—and therefore a measure of influence—in whatever followed—but only if we could find a way to tell our story in a simple way.

The day after our briefing the Senate Banking Committee held the first-ever congressional hearing on CDFIs. After the hearing, a few of us nervously cornered Senate Banking Committee staffers, including our own Jeannine Jacokes, who played a central role as a Senate staffer. We wanted to find out if we had done enough to earn a seat at the table in the mysterious discussions that were going to take place in Washington. (We were still new at the policy game.) Jeannine and her colleague stared at us with wide eyes. "What do you mean?" they asked. "It's your table."
That map made sure that the CDFI Fund was built on the foundation of CDFI practice and not woven out of the thin air of good intentions. It ensured that we were playing on our home turf.

But when I look up at the map today I see something different.

I see the defining challenge we face as an industry, the challenge of Coverage: providing responsible, affordable financial products and services to disadvantaged people and communities everywhere there is need.

We are no longer looking simply to fill in the map or add dots. Our goal is to re-draw the map on our terms, where resources target opportunities that address needs.

To that end, OFN is now and will remain focused at least through 2025 on expanding coverage by CDFIs and our partners so that more low-income, low-wealth, and other disadvantaged people can act in the best interests of their communities, themselves, and future generations.

Our strategy is to take our work to new geographies, innovate and introduce new products and services, unify the industry toward a vision of collaborative impact, and anchor a broad movement of individuals and institutions supporting our core purpose of aligning capital with justice.

We are introducing a new map today that will help all of us measure our progress and our challenges: it is OFN’s Coverage Map, an ambitious effort to show ourselves and others what we are achieving and, equally important, what still needs to get done.

OFN’s Coverage Map, built on the PolicyMap platform, will help us measure Coverage—yours and your partners’—against need. It will factor in both geographic and product Coverage.

Today it is mainly just a good idea that needs a lot of work. As it evolves over time, it will be a tool for all of us for financing, capitalization, funding, policy, communications, branding, and strategy.

It will provide a visual representation of why CDFIs exist, why CDFIs alone will never be sufficient, and—most important to our strategy—how CDFIs can be tugboats guiding and
prodding the big boats of finance and financial services responsibly into underserved and distressed communities.

It doesn’t take a high-tech Coverage Map today to know that we are just getting started on what will be a marathon.

In 1993 our Coverage was indistinguishable from background noise—notwithstanding the big dots we put on that map. We have made a little progress. Today—with CDFIs working in all 50 states, in Indian Country, providing more than $5 billion a year in loans and investments—we are measureable, but still immaterial in the big picture.

I know the goal of Coverage I am describing seems impossible, so I want you to meet Trasie Phan.

Late last year, Trasie, an ultamarathoner, called OFN.

She planned to raise money for Create Jobs for USA, our collaboration with Starbucks, Google, Banana Republic, Citi, and others.

Trasie was lining up sponsors for a 100-mile ultramarathon on June 10th in the mountains outside San Diego, where she lives and works. Her goal was to raise $10,000 by running.

For the first 50 miles, Trasie reports, she was feeling good. But she ran into trouble that made it impossible to keep running. She could no longer take in nutrition. In that state—50 miles in—she did the best she could.

For Trasie, that meant she ran 32 miles more before she stopped.

I invited Trasie to join us this week as a special guest, to say thank you, and to draw on her inspiration. Trasie, please stand up.

How many of us can imagine running 32 miles after our bodies say, “No more?” How many of us can run 32 miles?

Well, how about three miles?
Tomorrow morning, at 6 a.m., Trasie and OFN Board Chair Ignacio Esteban will be leading a 3-mile “fun run” for about 40 conference participants—6 miles for those of you who want to have a lot of fun—each of whom paid $5 for the honor. The money we raise will go toward Trasie’s contribution to Create Jobs.

I also invited Trasie here to meet the CDFIs she is helping to support.

104 CDFIs—104 of you—received capital grants through Create Jobs for USA and are lending to create and retain jobs. This is the first time we get to see you in one place, so I want to ask everyone working at a participating CDFI to please stand up.

Now, CDFIs, there is someone else I would like you to meet, someone who has been your unsung champion on a daily basis for the past year.

Gina Woods has led Starbucks’ work on Create Jobs for USA since Adam Brotman went back to his day job as Chief Digital Officer. She is a passionate advocate for your work inside Starbucks and with scores of other corporations. And she is a great joy to work with.

Please help me show Gina your appreciation for all she has done.

My wish this week is that Gina leaves San Antonio feeling as good about her connection to your work as I do about her leadership.

Create Jobs has been a journey full of excitement, exploration, and new experience for all of us. It brought us unprecedented mass market visibility; it taught us how to explain our work to diverse audiences; it helped us see ourselves as others see us; it helped us see ourselves in new ways; it taught us that we offer solutions that our economy and our nation need; it added substantial oomph to our policy efforts; and it introduced us to many companies and people we otherwise would not have met.

Oh yeah, and it raised more than $13.5 million for capital grants from more than 700,000 individuals and corporations supporting more than $90 million in CDFI financing resulting in a net jobs benefit of more than 4,000 jobs—that’s 4,000 jobs created and retained.
Along the way, I made many good friends at Starbucks, including an inspiring and remarkable leader.

Starbucks Chairman and CEO Howard Schultz brought to Create Jobs a clear sense of purpose that he turned into an unprecedented commitment to your work. The result is something that I know he values personally as well as professionally, as he wants to tell you himself.

Howard could not join us in person today but I am very pleased and honored that he is joining us by video to talk to you about what Create Jobs for USA means to him.

*(Howard Schultz video is available at www.opportunityfinance.net)*

Gina, please tell Howard how deeply we appreciate his hard work on our behalf, his support, and—most of all—his belief in what we do. Please also convey to the entire team—Adam, V, Corey, Jim, Kristen, Colleen, and the others—our warmest thanks.

Through Create Jobs, OFN and many of you have had the valuable experience of learning alongside one of the best branding minds in the world, Howard, and one of the world’s best branding and marketing companies—as it leveraged its reputation and brand, as well as its scale, for good.

This is a great gift because the CDFI industry today is no longer hidden in plain sight. For a long time we were invisible and oddly proud about it. Gradually, we started to get noticed.

Last Fall, suddenly, we were calling attention to our work in an ad during game 7 of the 2011 World Series and in full-page ads in the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, and USA Today. You were overnight sensations decades in the making.

As a result, more people and institutions know about you than you probably dreamed possible and they want to know more.

Major media coverage of CDFIs now is almost routine. And for more reasons than just Create Jobs for USA, elected officials at the federal, state, and local levels recognize you. So do bank executives—not just CRA bankers, but C-level executives—as do bank regulators at the highest levels and community leaders at all levels.

They get us. What we do makes sense to them. We are solutions to problems. More partners will come our way as a result. Now we need to make CDFIs and your work accessible to a much broader audience.

I want to make three points about this:

First, we are starting—just starting—to make an impression on a mass-market audience, and it’s a good impression. We are learning to show ourselves and describe our roles in ways that cut through the clutter of our dense, infinitely nuanced CDFI vocabulary.
We cannot succeed over the next 5, 10, and 15 years if we do not make CDFIs familiar in favorable ways to a mass market so that we have a broad base of support when we need it. Because we will need it.

Second, while Create Jobs brought this mass-market visibility on us, even that would not have been possible for us if we had not been getting there on our own.

The “Opportunity. Multiplied” video OFN premiered last year in Minneapolis is, in my mind, at least as important to the industry’s marketing as Create Jobs. Produced by OFN’s Lina Page, that breakthrough video builds on years of learning alongside many of you.

Third, as unlikely as it seems, our public reputation now is a valuable asset we must burnish, cultivate, and protect.

But too many of you still squirm at talk of Branding and Marketing.

**OFN needs you to embrace branding and brand marketing! That is my first call to action today.**

Branding and brand marketing help us connect with the right people in the right ways. That translates into more productive CDFIs, more dedicated support, and more opportunities on our terms.

OFN will be steadily investing more on branding and marketing. It is a foundation of our strategy.

OFN started a process this year that we will finish in 2013 to connect the Opportunity Finance brand not just to institutions and organizations but to individuals and the broad general public. And we believe the two audiences must and can be unified in a single “opportunity finance” brand.

It will manifest itself in a new, very different OFN web site, new communications and messaging tools and techniques, expanded earned media and social media use, and much more support for you to help you make the best possible use of your brand assets.

Our goal is to make it easier for the people who do not yet know about you to find CDFIs, join us, and support us and the things we work for. This will help build a new movement of support for your work and our policy efforts and generate new funding and capital opportunities.

As it does, we need to prepare ourselves to meet their expectations for authenticity, transparency, and integrity.

**My second call to action today is to ask you to recommit our industry to performance.** With visibility comes scrutiny. The biggest danger we face is the risk that our actions are not equal to our promise, embedded in our core values, of excellence.

In 1989, the Members of this organization pledged to hold themselves and each other, through OFN, to the conviction that the people we serve have the right to expect the same level of quality
and performance as anyone else. That defining commitment has paid dividends at the CDFI Fund, with Create Jobs for USA, and in many other ways. As more people are watching us, it will be even more important.

OFN started CARS, the CDFI Assessment and Ratings System, in 2004, anticipating the general trend of CDFI visibility. The promise of CARS is beginning to produce tangible benefits.

Nearly two-thirds of the CDFIs in a 2011 CARS survey reported that being rated improved their ability to raise capital and operating grants.

OFN will continue to encourage and support performance in every way possible, including walking the walk.

CARS spun off from OFN this past January so that it can maximize its value to the CDFI industry. As a result, I am very pleased to tell you that OFN can and will get rated by CARS in 2013.

In addition, next year OFN will introduce a new set of consulting services to help CDFIs prepare for a CARS rating and to make changes based on what CARS finds.

OFN continues to expand our services to support CDFI expansion, growth, coverage, and performance in other ways.

We are very pleased to be working with the CDFI Fund on three major capacity building efforts: Financing Healthy Foods Options, Scaling Up Microfinance, and Strengthening Small and Emerging CDFIs.

Earlier this year, OFN held our first-ever Small Business Finance Forum in response to the surge in business financing by Members and others. Next year we plan to hold a second Small Business Forum and to add another Forum on a second topic, all in addition to the four regional meetings we will convene.

We offer these and other services to help CDFIs build on the experience of their peers and others. We also see them as critical to OFN’s Membership strategy.

Not all CDFIs are ready for OFN Membership, either because they do not yet have sufficient lending experience or because they have material, operational, or performance issues.

Our Membership goal is to recruit, support, and retain a larger, much more diverse group of CDFIs, including loan funds, credit unions, banks, and equity funds. OFN’s membership will broaden to include CDFIs providing both credit and financial services.

Just last month, the OFN Membership grew to more than 200 performance-oriented CDFIs. But in 2012 we accepted just one of every two applicants, and so we offer a full array of capacity building opportunities to strengthen the field.

OFN does not want or plan to work on this alone. We are proud of our collaborations with partners ranging from the Aspen Institute’s FIELD Program to the National Federation of
Community Development Credit Unions to the Center for Financial Services Innovation to The Carsey Institute to many of our Member CDFIs who have brought unique expertise to help their peers.

The second reason we are disciplined about our Membership strategy is that the boundaries defining what is and is not a CDFI are porous and seem to be leaking. While we strive to bring CDFIs into the OFN fold, we all face a growing problem with what people are calling “CDFIs in Name Only.”

Equally important, there is a flurry of efforts to raise capital in the name of impact—ranging from Socially Responsible Investing to Social Capital to Locavesting to Impact Investing to Slow Money to Mission-related Investing.

I am all for them because they are promising good results. But I will be for them in the CDFI space only so long as they result in capital and other resources that advance the work CDFIs are doing. It’s like they say here in Texas: “You can put your boots in the oven but that don’t make ‘em biscuits.”

CDFI financing benefits low-income and low-wealth people in large part because we leverage a wide array of subsidy streams. If the subsidy doesn’t come through donations or concessionary pricing, from government or investors or CDFIs, it is going to come out of the pockets of the people we mean to help.

That’s not right. That’s not acceptable.

Your customers work hard enough. All of us in the CDFI industry have a responsibility to make sure we don’t make it harder on them.

**My third call to action today is to make sure that new and recurring sources of capital meet the needs of the people we exist to serve ... first and last.** There are lots of glistening pots of gold, but not all of them are right for the work you do.

If our borrowers are subsidizing investors, we are cascading down a slippery slope of mission creep.

The challenge, of course, is that you need new sources of capital.

I want you to know that OFN is working on new capital products and sources for CDFIs, both through product innovation and policy. Our five-year business plan emphasizes significant expansion of OFN financing products, and we ARE making headway.

Our balance sheet has continued to grow, most notably because of capitalization for the second five years of the Wells Fargo NEXT Awards for Opportunity Finance. Starting this year, the NEXT awards are focused on CDFIs expanding Coverage—there’s that word again.
Please join us tonight as we honor our 2012 NEXT Opportunity Award recipients—Primary Care Development Corporation, Clearinghouse CDFI, and Corporation for Supportive Housing—and our NEXT Seed Capital Awardee, Opportunity Fund.

It is a lot of fun to award more than $8 million and even more exciting that our Opportunity Award recipients will be sharing their visions and passions with you.

OFN is working to re-shape our financing activities where we can add significant value. We are investing alongside several of you today through Participations, and we plan to do more of that.

OFN is developing a range of off-balance sheet approaches that we believe can deliver more capital to more of you at better pricing than OFN can offer today. I don’t want to give anything away, but we believe that Create Jobs for USA can be one platform to that end.

OFN applied this year for New Markets Tax Credits for the first time since we received an $8 million allocation in the first round. Our New Markets strategy is to support CDFIs in our Membership that either have New Markets transactions but no allocation or have more New Markets demand than available allocations.

At the same time, OFN will build on past efforts such as Equity Equivalents, opening the Federal Home Loan Bank system, as well as the CDFI Bond Program to bring new capital directly to CDFIs.

So far we have lost two years and $2 billion of Bond Program authority with only a fighting chance that we will see a working program—one that is operational and that works for CDFIs—in the next 12 months.

And so we will fight.

OFN is not about to give up on the Bond Program despite our frustration. In fact, we are preparing to go on the policy offensive on the Bond and in other areas.

Many of you have worked very hard with OFN to navigate a way forward on the Bond. And many people at the CDFI Fund and in the Treasury Department have labored to make it go. But, like you, OFN is disappointed that two years after Congress directed Treasury to implement the Bond Program, we have nothing to show.

A few weeks ago, OFN wrote to Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner asking for a meeting to demand that the Administration do two things: first, implement the Bond Program without further delay, and, second, reclaim the two lost years and $2 billion of lost resources.

That letter is the leading edge of an unprecedented CDFI policy effort that I am announcing right now.

Starting today, and running over the next two years, OFN will lead an industry-wide campaign—everyone will be asked to help—with three broad goals:
First, to preserve, protect, and extend our policy achievements ranging from core CDFI Fund programs to the Capital Magnet Fund to Federal Home Loan Bank access to SBA Community Advantage and Microfinance programs to, of course, the CDFI Bond Guarantee.

Second, to make sure CDFIs are at the right tables—to make sure, more broadly, that the next Congress and Administration recognize and give proper attention and respect to CDFIs consistent with the critical roles you play in the economy of the nation and our communities.

Third, to develop, introduce, pursue, and pass at least one major NEW law that will substantially increase capital resources for you and your work.

This is not a sprint; this is a marathon. We are just getting started.

**Your fourth call to action? It’s simple: jump in on policy with both feet!**

Bring with you your investors, borrowers, community allies, and—if you must—family members.

Is anyone here not feeling righteous anger about what is happening to your communities as we face an imminent federal fiscal cliff, a municipal fiscal crisis we talked about this morning that will reverberate for decades, legislative dysfunction, and poor policy execution?

OFN is gearing up for the lame duck session of Congress in a few weeks that could chart the course federal policy will take for the next 10 or 20 years. The impending six or seven weeks of federal action—or inaction—may be one of the most significant periods in policymaking this country has seen in our lifetimes.

Our nation is standing at the edge of a fiscal cliff. If Congress does nothing, on January 1st mandatory cuts will reduce spending in a draconian way that virtually everyone agrees will send our economy into a deep, deep recession—or worse.

But if Congress does act, the decisions it makes could have profound structural and systemic changes in much of government that will alter forever your work, your communities, and your nation.

Very simply, we cannot afford to sit in the back of the room.

Starting in January, we need to blanket federal offices with a CDFI presence. There will be many new Members of Congress, many new Administration officials regardless of who is in the White House, and a new playing field. We need to position CDFIs for a series of wins.

And then comes the hard, granular work of getting policy made over the coming two years.

You don’t have to wait until the lame duck session, however.

Before you leave San Antonio, I want each of you to add your signature to a sign-on letter OFN will send to Secretary Geithner next week demanding that the Administration reset the CDFI Bond Program clock so that our communities get all four years and all $4 billion.
I want you to sign a second letter, as well, to the Congressional leadership demanding extension of New Markets Tax Credits. OFN will deliver this CDFI industry letter to Congressional leaders on the first day the lame duck session convenes.

Both letters are available for review and signing at the OFN booth in the lobby.

In the coming critical months for CDFI policy, I need you to support the OFN policy team’s calls to action to make the CDFI voice heard. We expect to be asking you to write letters, make calls, visit congressional offices, write letters to the media, spread the word through social media, and generally engage your CDFI’s networks. We need to mobilize for two tough years ahead.

Later in the Spring, when the wheels of Washington are turning, I want you to join OFN for our Spring Advocacy Campaign. Go to Washington with us to meet in person with national policy makers.

Since 2011, the OFN Board has used its May Board meeting to make your voice heard. This past year, our meetings included the Chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, an Assistant Treasury Secretary, Chairman Bernanke and two other Fed Governors, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Director Cordray, and numerous others.

This year, with your participation, we will ratchet up the effort.

We do not expect, or want, you to do this on your own. We are ready to provide more support than ever.

To start, OFN will be opening a policy office in Washington in 2013 and adding staff there; employing our Opportunity Finance ACTION Network to provide a steady stream of action alerts and information; continuing our popular monthly “Staying Connected on Policy Calls” for Members, Allies, and others; and Flying CDFI leaders from pivotal states and congressional districts to DC.

OFN will provide you with a one-page document about the state and role of CDFIs today that you should share broadly, and we will provide OFN’s Opportunity Agenda for Policy Makers for your reference and use.

We need to work together closely. Our messaging must be consistent. There will be a lot of others making noise. Our agenda must be disciplined. Our information sharing must be thorough—you need to know what OFN is doing and OFN needs to know what you are doing.

The final element of our strategy over the next two years is to shepherd at least one major gain into law. I cannot tell you which opportunity will open for us, because politics is unpredictable, but I want to give you a sense of some of the ideas on the OFN table:

First, even as we fight to implement the CDFI Bond Guarantee Program, we will be working on a second-generation bond program, learning from the experience of the past couple of years. It will be larger and better suited to what you need.
Second, with tax reform at the front of the line for Congress next year, we will be exploring the potential of a Community Gains Tax that, like the capital gains tax, gives an advantage to investments in distressed and underserved markets.

Third, we continue to believe that it should be the law of the land that all corporations that benefit from or depend on federal fiscal and tax policies should have an affirmative obligation to invest in distressed and underserved communities, through CDFIs and otherwise.

CDFIs are never going to win a power game in Washington. From the day we showed up at the Senate with our last-minute map, we have relied on the authenticity of our experience, the integrity of our practice, and the agility of our wits to make up for our lack of political action committees, teams of lawyers, and political hobnobbing.

We believe, instead, that right can make might.

That is what started to happen 50 years ago, in 1962, when President Kennedy took interest in an obscure book. “The Other America” by Michael Harrington documented poverty in the U.S. at a time when denial hid it and racism denigrated it. That poverty, Harrington documented, was invisible.

The Civil Rights Movement made it visible and undeniable.

And a Texan born and raised 60 miles from here made an historic difference because of his deep, core beliefs, a sound strategy, smart tactics, and the conviction that sometimes the impossible really is possible.

Lyndon Johnson was a complex, flawed champion of opportunity. He grew up in deep poverty, and he knew injustice. Somehow he hid from even his closest aides and friends his determination to do something about it. Given the chance, just days after President Kennedy’s assassination, he made history that is alive in this room today.

On November 26, 1963, prepping for his first address to Congress, Johnson knew he had to persuade Congress and the American public that he could lead despite a reputation as a country hick. He had to overcome widespread fears that President Kennedy’s assassination was a Communist plot and that the nation’s security was in acute peril. He had to honor his nation’s grief, reassure that President Kennedy had not died in vain, and help a scared nation to sleep better.

But he wanted to do something more, something impossible. He wanted to pass the Civil Rights Act, which was languishing in Congress behind the immovable obstacle of a tax-cut bill, a stalled budget, and racist Southern Senate Democrats, his lifelong friends.

A senior aide told him bluntly that a President shouldn’t spend his time and power on lost causes, no matter how worthy, according to Johnson biographer Robert Caro.

But Johnson saw a path forward on civil rights that no one else could see.
“Well,” he asked. “What the hell’s the presidency for?”

In just seven short weeks between President Kennedy’s assassination and President Johnson’s first State of the Union address, he unlocked a Congress far less functional than our current Congress, shook loose a stuck tax bill standing in the way of a budget, and paved the pathway to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Equal Employment Opportunities Act, Medicare, Medicaid, Head Start, and more.

Caro says that Johnson built “a platform from which to launch a crusade for social justice on a vast new scale—made these [seven] weeks...a pivotal moment in the history of the United States.”

That is the work we are doing today. And we are not done.

On January 10, 1964, in the State of the Union, Johnson broadened the challenge:

“Unfortunately,” he said, “many Americans live on the outskirts of hope—some because of their poverty, and some because of their color, and all too many because of both. Our task is to help replace their despair with opportunity.”

And then he declared a War on Poverty in the United States.

It is no longer simply a War on Poverty—that got lost in the tragic tangle of the War in Vietnam.

It is a campaign for opportunity. And we are just getting started.

We WILL replace despair rooted in poverty and racism with opportunity. We will do it by aligning capital with social, economic, and political justice.

We are in this for the long run. It is an ultra-marathon. THAT is why we have a 15-year mission and a 100-year core purpose.

Fifty years in and lots of hard work lies ahead.

At 50 miles, Trasie Phan’s body couldn’t go on. But she did.
Fifty years in, poverty remains high—shamefully high, with more than 46 million Americans living in poverty, particularly African Americans, Hispanics, and kids; we must replace the injustice of unequal social, economic, and political mobility.

Fifty years in, the level of unemployment is unacceptable, particularly for people of color and young workers; we must replace the injustice of unequal economic opportunities.

Fifty years in, housing is still a burden and not a comfort for many millions of us; we must replace the injustice of people and communities denied basic, decent shelter.

Fifty years OUT—50 years from now—what will be different? What solutions can your CDFI offer? What can you do? How will the world be a more just place?

You are just getting started.

CDFIs are more important than ever, so now we must make difficult, strategic choices. Now is not the time to lose our focus on the people we work to serve—low-income, low-wealth, and other disadvantaged people and communities.

CDFIs are more valuable to more people than ever, so now we must develop and adapt the products and services that will enable us to reach many millions more. Now is not the time to sacrifice mission or innovation for comfort.

CDFIs are in more places, so now we must work together, with many partners, to extend our coverage much further. Now is not the time to isolate ourselves from the wave of economic woes overrunning the doorsteps of our communities.

CDFIs are on the economic, policy, and social map in the U.S., so now we must redraw the map on our terms. It must be a map of opportunities where there is need.

Opportunities for U.S.A.

Opportunities for all.

My final call to action today is that you rededicate yourself here and now to the impossible idea that we CAN create opportunities for all. This call is not to your head but to your heart.

I want you to leave San Antonio leaning more firmly and with greater determination into the long arc of the moral universe. Go home with the resolve that you will serve more people, create more economic opportunities, foster more justice, help provide more CDFI Coverage.

Wake up on Friday morning—and every day after—knowing that although you work in a transactional business you play a transformational role. Look around at the seared landscape speckled with green sprouts of possibility and ask yourself just this one question:

What the hell is a CDFI for?
☆ 5 Calls to Action ☆

1. Embrace Branding & Brand Marketing
2. Recommit to Performance
3. Make Capital Fit CDFI Customers
4. Jump Into Policy
5. Dedicate Yourself to Creating Opportunities for All