



Colorado Enterprise Fund (CEF) FAQ

What exactly does the CEF do and why?

We are a non-profit lending institution that offers loans to small businesses unable to get traditional bank financing.

For 40 years, we've been helping people realize their dreams of starting and growing their own businesses.

We invest more than just money into our borrowers. We provide them with one-on-one business training and coaching to help them succeed. And when our borrowers succeed, our local communities grow and thrive.

How do you differ from a bank?

Our lending guidelines are more flexible than traditional banks because our purpose is community impact, not profit. While we review all aspects of a loan request in our decision-making process, we are able to take more risks due to our mission. To learn more, click [here](#).

Do you only focus on Colorado or do your efforts reach beyond state lines?

Colorado Enterprise Fund is the first non-profit lending institution in Colorado, and we fund small businesses only in our state. Small businesses comprise 98% of all businesses in the state, and our financing is an engine that helps drive Colorado's small business economy.

How is CEF funded?

Colorado Enterprise Fund is a non-profit corporation that leverages investments and grants from financial institutions, foundations, government agencies, other non-profits and individuals to provide capital and technical assistance to borrowers. Together with these funders, we serve small businesses and their communities throughout the state in a sustainable and responsible manner.

Our funders are integral to our success as they provide not only the funding for loans to our clients, but also general operating support for the organization.

It's also important to note that we were the first lending institution in Colorado to be certified by the U.S. Department of the Treasury as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI). This certification allows us to receive CDFI funds awarded nationwide to responsible financial institutions like CEF that serve economically distressed communities and empower underserved people to enter the economic mainstream.

How big is your staff and are they all in the Metro Denver area?

We have a dedicated and talented full-time staff of 19. The majority of our staff is based in our office in downtown Denver with remaining staff based in the Fort Collins area.



What does CEF stand for and what does it mean?

CEF stands for Colorado Enterprise Fund, and we are a non-profit lending institution that offers loans to small businesses unable to get traditional bank financing so that Colorado communities can have a healthy and prosperous economy.

How does CEF make money?

Like other financial lending institutions, CEF earns revenue from the interest and fees on our loans. Since our purpose is impact, not profit, this revenue covers about half the cost of running our programs. Our remaining operation costs are covered by contributions from government, foundations and other philanthropic donors.

How does CEF differ from other non-profit lending organizations?

Colorado Enterprise Fund offers a wide range of loan products to meet the needs of small businesses, but our relationship with our borrowers goes far beyond the loan. At little or no cost, we provide borrowers with in-house one-on-one business training and coaching to help them succeed. We provide this training when and where they need it – in person, online or by phone – in English or Spanish. We also offer our borrowers access to experienced business professionals addressing legal, accounting, organizational management and marketing areas.

How does CEF make a difference?

Colorado Enterprise Fund supports big dreams and creates big opportunities for small businesses, which make up 98% of all businesses in Colorado. Small business is big business in Colorado, and we make a difference by supporting the growth of our state's diverse economy!

What businesses do you finance most frequently?

We support a wide range of start-ups and small businesses, but our most common borrowers are in the service industry, accounting for one quarter of our loans. Other businesses we frequently finance are in manufacturing, retail and wholesale trade, and the food service industries.

Where do you get your borrowers?

Thirty percent of our borrowers come from bank referrals. Another twenty percent are referred by our partners at the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) and SCORE, with the remainder reaching us by word of mouth through professional and personal contacts, and via the internet.

Are you a federal government agency?

We are not a government agency. We are an independent non-profit corporation. However, we are certified by the U.S. Small Business Administration and the U.S. Department of the Treasury, which enables us to receive funding from federal programs designed to help stimulate community and economic development.

Are you affiliated with the State of Colorado?

No, we are not affiliated with the State, although we have received some funding from the State. We do serve small business clients across the entire state.



What's your relationship with the City of Denver?

We partner with the Office of Economic Development on a number of small business programs, including the Healthy Corner Store Initiative, Denver Start-Up Week, and the Certifiably Green business program.

What products and services do you offer?

We provide loans for working capital, equipment or inventory purchase, purchases of franchises and existing businesses, business property improvements, gap financing for business real estate, and refinancing of high interest loans or credit cards. We also offer business lines of credit.

We have a Healthy Foods Fund for financing a wide range of healthy food businesses encompassing all segments of the food system. With this fund, we help reduce the "food deserts" in our state, which are communities that struggle to offer fresh fruit, vegetables, and other healthful whole foods largely due to a lack of grocery stores, farmers' markets, or healthy food providers.

In addition, at little or no cost, we offer our borrowers in-house, one-on-one business training and coaching to help them succeed. We provide this training when and where they need it – in person, online or by phone – in English or Spanish.

What are your loan rates and terms?

Our small business [loans](#) range from \$1,000 to \$500,000 with a range of rates and terms that are tailored to meet the needs of each business we serve.

Do I have to be rejected by a bank or credit union before coming to CEF for a loan?

Absolutely not! We have many bank and credit union partners across the state, and encourage applicants to explore loan options with them first, but applicants do not have to be rejected by a financial institution in Colorado to qualify for a loan from CEF.

What are the loan amounts that you fund? Is there an average amount?

Our small business [loans](#) range from \$1,000 to \$500,000 with a range of rates and terms. Since we offer a variety of loan products to meet various small business needs, an average loan size depends on the type of loan product and use of funds.

What's required to qualify for a loan, and how long does it take?

We utilize basic lending principles when reviewing a small business loan application, but the difference is that we are more flexible in how we apply these principles.

Qualifying factors include the ability to repay the loan, how much experience you have in the industry, collateral to secure the loan, and a good payment history with other creditors. Once your application has been submitted for underwriting, we will consider these factors and others including the business industry climate, cash flow/profitability, and equity in the business.

The speed of the application process and getting approved depends largely on how quickly borrowers submit their paperwork for review.



If I'm interested in applying for a loan, how do I start?

It's easy! Click [here](#), or contact our office and we will connect you with one of our lending officers.

Here is our contact information:

Phone: 303.860.0242

Email: info@coloradoenterprisefund.org