

CDFI Certification

Frequently Asked Questions

General

1. What does it mean to be certified as a CDFI?

Certification as a CDFI means that an organization meets the CDFI certification eligibility requirements. A certified CDFI must:

- Be a legal entity;
- Have a primary mission of promoting community development;
- Be a financing entity;
- Provide Development Services;
- Principally serve one or more eligible Target Markets;
- Be accountable to the Target Markets served;
- Not be either a government entity or controlled by a government entity.

These requirements are set forth in the CDFI Program regulations at 12 CFR §1805.200 and 12 CFR §1805.201.

2. What does it not mean to be certified as a CDFI?

Certification does not constitute an opinion by the CDFI Fund as to the effectiveness or financial viability of the certified organization.

3. What are the benefits of certification as a CDFI?

There are several important potential benefits of CDFI certification:

- Access to CDFI Fund Programs: CDFI certification makes an organization eligible to participate in and/or to receive awards under the following CDFI Fund programs, such as:
 - CDFI Program:
 - Financial Assistance (FA)
 - Technical Assistance (TA)
 - Bank Enterprise Award Program (BEA)
 - Native Initiatives (NACA)
 - New Markets Tax Credit Program (NMTC) – Certified CDFIs can register for CDE Certification.
- Leveraging other Funding Sources: Some CDFIs have found that their CDFI certification increases their ability to raise capital from other sources such as banks, foundations, and government agencies at all levels, including federal, state and local government agencies.

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- Organizational Development: The process of applying for CDFI certification may help an organization think about and sharpen its strategic plans, objectives, and business activities.

4. How is a Community Development Entity (CDE) different from a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI)?

A certified CDE is a domestic corporation or partnership that is an intermediary vehicle for the provision of loans, investments or financial counseling in “Low-Income Communities” (LICs) under the New Markets Tax Credit Program. A certified CDFI is a financial institution that specializes in serving underserved people, underserved and distressed communities, and the residents of such communities, which are defined as Target Markets (TMs) and that meets all of the criteria set forth in the response to question 1, above.

While the criteria for each of these certifications are similar in some ways, there are differences. Additionally, LICs and TMs are not equivalent, as each has its own definition.

A certified CDFI may register as, and be automatically deemed, a CDE. However, a certified CDE must complete the CDFI certification application and meet all the certification requirements in order to obtain CDFI status.

5. Does an organization have to be certified as a CDFI to apply for and receive Financial or Technical Assistance under the CDFI Program?

Regarding Financial Assistance: In order for an organization to receive a Financial Assistance award, an organization must be certified as a CDFI. However, the organization may still apply for Financial Assistance if it has submitted an application for CDFI Certification by the applicable deadline and is still waiting for the CDFI Fund to render a determination on the organization’s CDFI Certification application.

Regarding Technical Assistance: An organization that does not meet each of the certification eligibility requirements at the time of application for Technical Assistance is still eligible to apply for and receive Technical Assistance. In order for an uncertified organization to receive a Technical Assistance award, the CDFI Fund must determine that the organization’s Technical Assistance application materials provide a realistic course of action to ensure that it will meet each of the CDFI Certification requirements within two years of entering into an Assistance Agreement with the CDFI Fund.

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6. Are EIN and DUNS numbers necessary in order to apply for and receive CDFI Certification?

Yes. An organization must have documentation that it has received its nine-digit Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in order to meet the CDFI Certification criteria. Moreover, to set up a myCDFI Fund account, which is a necessary step in the CDFI Certification application process, an applicant is required to provide its EIN. A Dun & Bradstreet number is required for the signature page portion the CDFI Certification application process.

7. Once the CDFI Certification Application has been completely filled out, where should it be submitted?

Please send the completed CDFI Certification Application, including any additional information requested by the CDFI Fund, to the following address:

Grants Manager, CDFI Certification Application
CDFI Fund/Department of Treasury
601 13th Street, NW, Suite 200 South
Washington, D.C. 20005

Faxed or e-mailed CDFI Certification applications will not be accepted.

8. Where can interested organizations get the current list of certified CDFIs?

Lists of certified CDFIs, organized alphabetically, by state and city, and by industry type, are available on the CDFI Fund website (www.cdfifund.gov) in the CDFI Certification section. These lists are updated monthly.

If the copy of one of these lists you possess does not list the name of an organization you believe should be listed, you may inquire about the missing organization by calling or emailing the CDFI Fund Helpdesk at 202-622-6355, or cdfihelp@cdfi.treas.gov. It may be that the organization you are interested in was certified after the current lists were posted, and will be included in the next monthly update.

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9. What other resources are available to help me learn more about CDFI Certification?

- A. *CDFI Fund Website* - There is a tremendous amount of information regarding CDFI Certification on the CDFI Fund website (www.cdfifund.gov) including,
- [Application Materials](#)
 - [Guidance Materials](#)
 - [Webcast Application Training](#)
 - [Program Regulations](#)
 - [Lists of Certified CDFIs](#)
- B. *CDFI Fund Program Staff*
- [CDFI Fund Helpdesk](#): For general certification questions and quick answers, Program Staff can be contacted through the Helpdesk either by phone (202.622.6355) or by email (cdfihelp@cdfi.treas.gov).
 - [CDFI Fund Certification Program Staff](#): For more in-depth and situational certification questions, Certification Program Staff can be reached directly by phone – their contact information is available in the CDFI Certification section of the CDFI Fund website (www.cdfifund.gov).

Note: Before contacting CDFI Fund Program Staff, be sure to review the relevant information and documents available on the CDFI Fund website, as it will save time and allow staff to provide more in-depth answers more quickly.

10. How can an organization stay updated on CDFI Certification information and other information and events at the CDFI Fund?

The CDFI Fund provides a service called “[CDFI Updates](#)”, which is a free e-mail subscription management service designed to keep the community development finance industry, the media and the public informed of news and important updates from the CDFI Fund. To subscribe to this service, click on the link provided on the CDFI Fund website (www.cdfifund.gov) home page and follow the instructions.

CDFI Certification Application

1. What is the process for applying for CDFI certification?

Organizations can apply for CDFI certification by submitting a CDFI Certification application at any time throughout the year. The CDFI Certification Application and instructions for submission can be downloaded from the CDFI Certification section of the CDFI Fund’s web site (www.cdfifund.gov).

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2. When can an organization apply to become a CDFI?

As of July 2007, organizations can submit CDFI certification applications at anytime during the year for the purpose of becoming a certified CDFI. However, if the organization also plans to apply for CDFI Financial Assistance, the CDFI certification application **MUST** be received by the deadline stated in the Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) for the related funding round.

3. How long does it take to process a CDFI application?

Reviewers work diligently to ensure that the CDFI certifications are responded to in an appropriate timeframe. The applicant will be notified of its CDFI certification status

determination within 90 days from the date the CDFI certification application is received. The applicant will be contacted prior to the 90 day timeframe if additional time is necessary.

4. How will an organization be notified of its status?

An applicant's Authorized Representative will receive a notice of the applicant's CDFI Certification status through written correspondence. Therefore, the applicant must make sure the Authorized Representative's contact information is up-to-date within the applicant's myCDFI Fund account, as only the applicant can update information in its myCDFI Fund account.

Target Market Area Maps

1. How do I create a map of a Target Market?

In order to create a map of a Target Market, an organization must first create a myCDFI Fund account. To create a myCDFI Fund account, follow the myCDFI Fund link on the CDFI Fund website home page (www.cdfifund.gov). From the organization's myCDFI Fund account, the organization can access the CDFI Fund mapping program (CIMS). A tutorial on the mapping program is available on the first screen within the mapping program. Instructions for designating the Target Market area(s) are located in the CDFI Certification section of the CDFI Fund website (www.cdfifund.gov).

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Recertification

1. My organization's CDFI certification will expire soon, what should we do?

The CDFI Fund is currently in the process of revising its recertification process. Prior to your organization's certification expiration date, your Authorized Representative should receive a letter notifying him/her that the expiration date has been extended indefinitely until further notice. The CDFI Fund will contact all CDFIs with extended certification expiration dates once a revised recertification process is in place, and will provide those CDFIs with instructions as to how to proceed.

Modifications to an Organization's Current Certification

1. My organization is interested in expanding (or reducing) its certified Target Market(s). How do I request a change to my organization's certified Target Market?

A CDFI that wishes to change its certified Target Market must complete and submit a new CDFI Certification Signature Page (CCSP) electronically through its myCDFI Fund account. The CCSP can be accessed from the "Applications" link in the left-hand menu bar on the CDFI's myCDFI Fund account homepage. The CDFI should follow the instructions contained in the electronic interface of the CCSP.

The CDFI will need to attach the following to the CCSP:

- Narrative descriptions of the existing and proposed revised Target Market(s);
- A new up-to-date Target Market Table; a new up-to-date Accountability Chart;
- Any required documentation attachments, as described in the "CDFI Certification Criteria - Target Market" section of the CDFI Certification Application, such as Investment Area or Other Targeted Population designation narrative explanations, and verification narrative.

The CDFI Certification Application is available in the CDFI Certification section of the CDFI Fund website, as are the aforementioned Tables and Charts.

The CDFI will also have to create electronic map(s) (using the CDFI Fund's mapping program, CIMS) of its Target Market(s) and save it/them to the new CCSP. Note, the CDFI must create, but not submit, the CCSP before it can save maps to the CCSP. For detailed information regarding saving maps to the CCSP, refer to the document, "Instructions: Designating a Target Market In myCDFIFund", which is available on the CDFI Fund website.

Please note that a CDFI must demonstrate that it is actively engaged in providing products and services, and is accountable to the proposed revised Target Market(s). The proposed revised Target Market(s), if approved, will replace the existing certified Target Market(s).

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The CDFI Fund will review the submitted materials and determine whether the organization continues to meet the certification requirements for CDFIs. A final determination will be made and the CDFI will be notified of the decision in writing.

Contacting CDFI Fund Program Staff

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- CDFI Fund Helpdesk: For general certification questions and quick answers, Program Staff can be contacted through the Helpdesk either by phone (202.622.6355) or by email (cdfihelp@cdfi.treas.gov).
- CDFI Fund Certification Program Staff: For more in-depth and situational certification questions, Certification Program Staff can be reached directly by phone – their contact information is available in the CDFI Certification section of the CDFI Fund website (www.cdfifund.gov).

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