

## Accessity Secures \$5.8M Grant from CDFI ERP Fund

**NONPROFITS:** Second Largest Grant Award Received in California

■ By KAREN PEARLMAN

April showered local nonprofit business lender Accessity with a financial windfall.

The nonprofit formerly known as Accion San Diego received nearly \$6 million from the federal government as part of a \$1.73 billion grant program coming in response to economic impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The announcement of Accessity's \$5,887,242 grant award by the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Community Development Financial Institutions Fund Equitable Recovery Program came on April 10.

"We are thrilled to have this opportunity," Accessity CEO **Elizabeth Schott** said. "We feel extremely proud to be part of this award and our team is honored to have received this award and continue our impactful mission as a CDFI. We look forward to deploying these funds into small businesses that have experienced disproportionate economic impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic through a loan program which will have more flexible eligibility criteria, educational resources, as well as a small grant component. When we eventually launch this, many people will benefit."

As part of the fund's directives and qualifications criteria necessary to be considered, Accessity will use the majority of the money to provide direct access to capital to minority-owned or minority-controlled small businesses located

within eligible Equitable Recovery Program geographical locations in southern California.

In addition, a portion of the funds will be used to build Accessity's capacity in development services to support small businesses with education and training, as well as provide operational support for the organization to carry out future increased equitable recovery activities.

Accessity supports both startup and expanding businesses with ed-

ucation, resources and connections to improve their long-term success and self-sufficiency, allowing the businesses "to contribute to positive economic and social change in our communities," Schott said.

The group provides economic opportunity to entrepreneurs through access to small business loans from \$300 to \$100,000 plus a community of support and resources throughout the region.

Accessity's focus is on opening doors of financial opportunity to those with historically less access to capital and business support – entrepreneurs of color, women, immigrants and low- to moderate-income entrepreneurs. The hope is to help those who are underserved build prosperous businesses and livelihoods for themselves and their families, while also strengthening communities, Schott said.



**Gordon Boerner**  
Chairman  
Accessity

A news release from the White House said that as authorized by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (Pub. L. 116-260) to respond to the economic effects of COVID-19, "CDFI ERP is designed to provide funding to certified CDFIs to expand lending, grant making and investment activities in low- to moderate-income communities and to borrowers with significant unmet capital and financial services needs that have experienced disproportionate economic impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic."

The funding is also meant to catalyze growth in the financial and organizational capacity of CDFIs to carry out equitable recovery activities.

**Gordon Boerner**, chairman of Accessity's board of directors said the group is "excited to bring the second-largest CDFI ERP grant in California" to the region.

"Accessity has been supporting San Diego small businesses for 29 years, and these funds will create a more equitable opportunity for access to capital," said Boerner, senior vice president, Western U.S. regional banking manager, U.S. Bank private wealth. "This access, coupled with supportive education and resources, will enable underserved communities across the region to experience economic recovery, job creation and future wealth generation."

Schott said while the plan for distributing the money is still in planning stages, the funds will be used to build the organization's capacity

in development services to support borrowers and operational support to carry out equitable recovery activities over five years.

Since 1994, Accessity has provided more than \$70 million in loans to small business owners, assisting them in starting, expanding, building self-sufficiency, and supporting local employment and the economy.

Since its creation – also in 1994 – the government's CDFI Fund has awarded more than \$7.4 billion to CDFIs, community development organizations and financial institutions. In addition, the CDFI Fund has allocated \$71 billion in tax credit allocation authority to community development entities through a New Markets Tax Credit Program. It has also closed guaranteed bonds for more than \$2.1 billion through the CDFI Bond Guarantee Program. ■



**Elizabeth Schott**  
CEO  
Accessity

Accessity



**FOUNDED:** 1994  
**CEO:** Elizabeth Schott  
**HEADQUARTERS:** Jacobs Center  
**BUSINESS:** Nonprofit lender  
**REVENUE:** \$5.3 million  
**EMPLOYEES:** 32  
**WEBSITE:** accessity.org  
**CONTACT:** info@accessity.org 619-795-7250  
**SOCIAL IMPACT:** Nonprofit spurs positive economic activity and job creation and retention.  
**NOTABLE:** Accessity provides access to capital as well as education, training and access to resources that support the long term and success of businesses.