



Seven Cities Enhance Small Business Services by Offering Financial Counseling for Entrepreneurs

With Support From Principal® Foundation, National Nonprofit The Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund Announces New Small Business Boost Cohort to Support Small Business Owners

March 10, 2025 – The [Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund](#) (CFE Fund) announced the selection of seven local governments to offer small business owners and entrepreneurs one-on-one Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) financial counseling through the CFE’s Small Business Boost (SBB) initiative. Beginning this month, those selected will connect their Financial Empowerment Center initiatives, which offer professional, one-on-one financial counseling as a free public service, to local business support services.

While small business ownership is widely regarded as a pathway toward wealth building, many small business owners and entrepreneurs face [personal finance barriers](#) that impede their ability to start or grow a business. This initiative, supported by Principal® Foundation, a global nonprofit organization committed to helping people and communities where Principal Financial Group, Inc operates build financially secure futures, will help local entrepreneurs and small business owners improve their personal finances, better positioning them to access capital and achieve their business goals. Selected grantees, which include Akron, OH; Aurora, IL; Columbus, OH; Louisville, KY; Polk County, IA; Rochester, NY; and Sacramento, CA, will receive a \$90,000 grant and robust technical assistance to support this work.

“Small business ownership can be a powerful pathway to opportunity, helping entrepreneurs build financial stability and wealth for themselves, their families, and their communities – but for too many people, personal finances are an obstacle to a strong start,” said **Jonathan Mintz, President and CEO of the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund**. “The Small Business Boost initiative will help entrepreneurs manage their personal finances so they can better access capital and generate wealth. We are proud to work with Principal® Foundation and our municipal Financial Empowerment Center partners on this crucial work.”

“Small businesses are the mainstay of our nation’s economy, the pathway to financial security for millions of Americans, and the backbone of our communities,” said Jo Christine Miles, director, Principal® Foundation, and Community Relations. “Principal® Foundation supports organizations and programs that remove barriers and create opportunities for small business owners and entrepreneurs so they can grow their business and build financially secure futures. It’s why we continue to support the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund and its Small Business Boost initiative – a program that has had a positive impact on local small business owners and their communities.

The CFE Fund [first piloted Small Business Boost](#), with Principal® Foundation funding, in five municipalities from March 2022-2023. The pilot program explored how FEC counseling could help entrepreneurs stabilize and improve their personal finances as the foundation for building and growing a sustainable business. This next chapter of SBB will build upon pilot learnings with an increased focus on how integrating financial counseling services with small business support programs impacts the business support service providers, as well as the entrepreneurs. In addition to creating new



relationships between entrepreneurs, service providers, and small business support programs, this iteration of the program will include robust qualitative research into the small business client journey and the impact of personal finances on entrepreneurial success.

First piloted in New York City under Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg in 2008, FECs across the country have worked with over 180,000 clients, helping them reduce individual debt by over \$293 million, and increasing their families' savings by over \$57 million. In addition, a [CFE Fund evaluation](#) showed that this program works even for residents with very low incomes and other complex financial challenges. There are currently over 35 cities that have launched, or are working to launch, a local Financial Empowerment Center initiative.

At the Financial Empowerment Centers, professionally trained FEC counselors help consumers with low and moderate incomes manage their finances, pay down debt, increase savings, establish and build credit, and access safe and affordable mainstream banking products. At the core of the FEC model is the integration of counseling into other social services, including housing and foreclosure prevention, workforce development, prisoner reentry, benefits access, domestic violence services, and more – Small Business Boost is an example of one such targeted integration. Through the Small Business Boost initiative, FEC counselors will support business owners and entrepreneurs in addressing personal financial challenges that present barriers to success in building wealth through business ownership through measures like separating personal from business finances and accounts, repairing credit and reducing debt to qualify for business loans, and more. In addition, the FEC counselors participating in the program will receive significant training on the relationship between personal finance and business growth, how to navigate entrepreneurial ecosystems, and how to help drive business outcomes through improving personal finances.

About Principal Foundation

Principal Financial Group Foundation, Inc. (“Principal[®] Foundation”) is a duly recognized 501(c)(3) entity focused on providing philanthropic support to organizations that build financial security in the communities where Principal Financial Group, Inc. (“Principal”) operates. While Principal Foundation receives funding from Principal, Principal Foundation is a distinct, independent, charitable entity. Principal Foundation does not practice any form of investment advisory services and is not authorized to do so. 4197795-012025

About the Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund (CFE Fund)

The CFE Fund supports municipal efforts to improve the financial stability of households by leveraging opportunities unique to local government. By translating cutting-edge experience with large scale programs, research, and policy in cities of all sizes, the CFE Fund assists mayors and other local leaders to identify, develop, fund, implement, and research pilots and programs that help families build assets and make the most of their financial resources. The CFE Fund is currently working in almost 150 cities and counties representing 62 million people and has disbursed over \$69 million to city governments and their partners to support these efforts. For more information, please visit www.cfefund.org or follow us on Bluesky at [@cfefund.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/cfefund.bsky.social).