

Ascendus[®]
THIS WAY UP

Strengthening Relationships
Along Our Clients'
Financial Journeys

2025 Outcomes and Impact
FLORIDA



ascendus.org

Support That Centers Our Clients

In 2025, Ascendus® reaffirmed our **vision of financial ascension for all** by making a deliberate choice about how to show up. As economic conditions shifted, pressure on small business owners intensified, and the broader CDFI landscape faced growing constraints, **we centered our work on standing with clients.**

Side by side with entrepreneurs, we focused on stabilizing businesses, protecting hard-earned progress, and navigating complex decisions—at a moment when many of the systems designed to support them were under strain. This year made explicit what has always guided our work: **durable impact is built through trusted relationships, shared responsibility, and the decision to stand together when conditions are hardest.**

Support That Unlocks Access

Throughout the year, Ascendus® supported

1,702 business owners **195** loans deployed **\$4.2M+** in capital delivered

807 jobs created and retained **\$22K** average loan size **95%** socially or economically disadvantaged

Our support system is designed to meet entrepreneurs at different stages of their financial journeys. Across all programs, **deployment was guided by a relationship-driven approach that prioritized fit, timing, and decisions that drive durable impact over volume.**



Small Business Loans

Programmatic lending aligned to business readiness

\$1.2M deployed

52 loans

\$24K average loan size

384 jobs created and retained



Lines of Credit (LOC)

Flexible working capital for cashflow and operations

\$419K available

21 lines of credit



Get Ready Program

Credit readiness and financial foundations

\$10.5K deployed

21 lines of credit

41% graduating to a **\$5,000** line of credit within six months through coaching-led support.



Small Business Catalyst Fund

In partnership with Fifth Third Bank and Community Reinvestment Fund, USA.

\$1.3M deployed

70 loans

\$19K average loan size
234 jobs created and retained



State Small Business Credit Initiatives (SSBCI)

State-led financing supporting business sustainability and local economic development

\$1.1M deployed

31 loans

\$37K average loan size
125 jobs created and retained

Support That *Unlocks Opportunity*

Across our markets, expanded outreach and consistent presence became central to this effort. **The lending team participated in 109 community-based events, engaging with 2,600 entrepreneurs and partners.** This sustained engagement reinforced trust, expanded access to information and capital, and strengthened relationships before, during, and beyond loan origination. Alongside outreach, **we delivered more than 2,460 hours of pre-loan financial coaching,** helping entrepreneurs assess readiness and make informed decisions at critical moments.

[EXPLORE OUR COMMUNITY OUTREACH](#)

Support That *Builds Resilience*

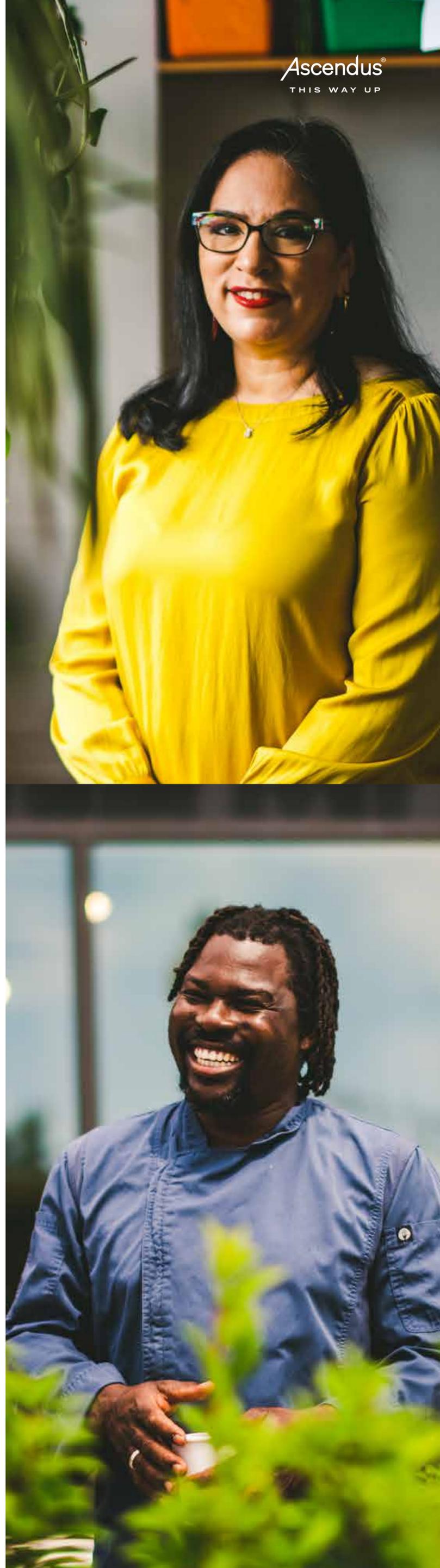
As financial stress intensified in 2025, **we responded by increasing Technical Assistance to current clients. We delivered 857 hours of one-on-one support, enabling earlier and more proactive guidance around cash flow, credit, and business decision-making—contributing to a 64% increase in portfolio engagement.**

To further support businesses under strain, **we introduced a new restructuring policy for core programmatic loans, prioritizing business viability while maintaining responsible portfolio stewardship. Historically, 75% of restructured loans successfully repay, reinforcing the value of early, relationship-driven intervention.**

Support That *Builds Readiness*

In 2025, **Ascendus[®] released the Get Ready Research Brief, marking a milestone in how relationship-driven practice is translated into shared field knowledge.** Grounded in direct work with small business owners who entered the program with limited access to traditional financing, the brief documents how timely capital paired with one-on-one coaching can shift financial trajectories. **Participants entered with an average credit score of 571, yet more than 75% remained in good standing, and 41% graduated from a \$500 line to \$5,000, with several accessing additional capital beyond the program.** As Part One of a two-part effort, the brief reinforces a core lesson from our work: when lending meets the moment and coaching builds confidence, entrepreneurs move forward with greater stability and resilience.

[DOWNLOAD THE GET READY RESEARCH BRIEF](#)



Support That *Honors Relationships*

Ascendus[®] mission is carried forward by a long-tenured and diverse team that reflects the communities we serve. With an average tenure of seven years, **57%** of staff identifying as women and nearly half identifying as Hispanic or Latino—alongside representation from Black, Asian, White, and other backgrounds—our team brings deep market knowledge, cultural fluency, and trust into daily client engagement.

In 2025, this commitment to relationship-driven work was honored through the launch of the **Carmen Duperon Values Award**, recognizing the legacy of our beloved Director of Services and the values—empathy, dedication, integrity, inclusion, adaptability, and passion—that continue to define how we show up.

[HONOR CARMEN DUPERON'S LEGACY](#)

Support Grounded in *Advocacy & Field Leadership*

Standing with clients in 2025 also meant showing up beyond direct service, bringing the lived realities of small business owners into national and regional conversations shaping community lending, small business finance, and economic mobility. Ascendus[®] participated in key sector convenings and policy forums, including OFN41 - Opportunity NEXT, the OFN Small Business Finance Forum, EMERGE Financial Health - Voices of Change, NALCAB's Policy Forum, and the Northeast / Mid-Atlantic Small Business Credit Symposium hosted at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

We also contributed to peer learning and field-building through the Microfinance Impact Collaborative and engaged in community-based policy dialogues via **Hispanic Federation convenings and state-level leadership briefings, including with Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey**, ensuring that real client experience continues to inform conversations shaping access, policy, and economic opportunity.

[SEE HOW WE LEAD IN THE FIELD](#)

Support That *Demonstrates Durable Impact*

Manny Almonte, founder of Cremosos, illustrates how Ascendus' relationship-driven approach translates into a measurable impact. Referred by a banking partner while scaling his food manufacturing business, Manny received capital and guidance aligned to his stage of growth. As a result, he increased business revenue 12x, expanded production from 190 units per day to up to 9,000, and created five part-time jobs. He later graduated to traditional bank lending, securing \$100,000 in financing, alongside a 4.2x increase in household income and improved credit—demonstrating what is possible when trusted relationships support right-timed access to capital.

[WATCH MANNY'S JOURNEY](#)

A Future Ready Support System

We stood with clients as conditions shifted across the small business and CDFI landscape. Through sustained relationships, responsible lending decisions, and advocacy rooted in lived experience, we supported entrepreneurs navigating uncertainty while protecting hard-earned progress. At the same time, we continued strengthening the internal systems and ways of working that allow us to show up consistently, make informed decisions, and remain accountable to the communities we serve. The outcomes achieved last year—across programs, partnerships, and individual journeys—underscore a core truth of our work: durable impact is built by standing together, especially when it matters most.

[STAND WITH US FOR FINANCIAL ASCENSION](#)

Ascendus[®]

THIS WAY UP



#1 SBA Microlender
South Florida
Third consecutive
year



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