DreamSpring Names Charles McElrath as Incoming Chief Executive Officer

A 35-year banking and community development veteran, McElrath will lead DreamSpring's mission to expand access to capital across 27 states.

ALBUQUERQUE, NM, UNITED STATES, June 10, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- DreamSpring, one of the nation's leading nonprofit community development financial institutions (CDFIs), today announced the appointment of Charles McElrath as its incoming Chief Executive Officer. A nationally respected banking and community development executive with more than 35 years of experience in commercial lending, economic development, and mission-driven finance, McElrath will lead DreamSpring into its next era of growth, innovation, and scalable community impact.

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>
> *Charles McElrath*

McElrath joins DreamSpring after serving as Senior Vice President – Commercial & Community Development Lender at Vista Bank in Dallas, where he focused on expanding community investment strategies and increasing access to capital in underserved communities. His work contributed to a more than 350% increase in loan production in 2025, earning recognition as the bank's top performer.

A longtime champion of place-based economic development, McElrath is widely recognized as a vanguard for scaling mission-driven lending strategies that create measurable economic mobility in underserved communities. During his 13 years as President & CEO of Southern Dallas Development Corporation, a CDFI that later merged with PeopleFund, he helped expand access to capital in one of the most economically challenged communities in Texas. Under his leadership, the organization generated more than $75 million in new loan commitments while reducing portfolio delinquency to under 1 percent. He also managed multiple lending companies and loan funds focused on promoting economic development in low-to-moderate income communities.

At DreamSpring, McElrath will focus on expanding the organization's reach and deepening its impact by scaling proven community-centered lending strategies across the organization's footprint, which spans the Southwest and beyond.

“Charles understands that entrepreneurship is one of the most powerful tools for economic mobility,” said Alice Rodriguez, Former JPMorganChase executive and Chair of the DreamSpring Board of Directors. “His career has been defined not only by increasing access to capital, but by building systems and partnerships capable of scaling impact across communities. He brings the vision, operational experience, and values-driven leadership needed to expand DreamSpring’s reach while remaining deeply connected to the entrepreneurs and communities we serve.”

McElrath’s experience spans community banking, national financial institutions, and mission-based lending organizations. In addition to his leadership at PeopleFund and Vista Bank, he has held senior roles with Liberty Bank and Trust Company, R Bank, Merrill Lynch, Comerica Bank, Bank of America, and other commercial lending institutions, bringing expertise across small business lending, middle market banking, community investment, and mission finance.

“DreamSpring has built an extraordinary legacy of empowering entrepreneurs and investing in communities large and small across our country,” said McElrath. “I’m honored to join an organization so deeply committed to supporting the American Dream at a time when it can feel out of reach for so many. I look forward to building resilient communities like Southern Dallas across DreamSpring’s footprint to help more entrepreneurs build wealth, create jobs, and

DreamSpring

DreamSpring is a nonprofit Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) and U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) lender dedicated to expanding access to capital for small business owners.

Charles McElrath, incoming Chief Executive Officer of DreamSpring.

strengthen their local economies.”

McElrath joins a seasoned executive leadership team with more than a century of combined experience in small business support, entrepreneurship, community development, and mission-driven finance. Acting CEO Marisa Barrera will continue supporting DreamSpring’s mission with her decades of leadership in public policy, governance, advocacy, and community development, providing continuity and strategic momentum during this next chapter of growth.

Raised in a household of modest means, McElrath credits education and access to opportunity as foundational to his professional journey. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Carleton College and later received his MBA from Baldwin Wallace University.

McElrath was selected through a national search led by Dallas-based Encantado Advisors. He will officially assume the role of CEO on June 15, 2026.

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