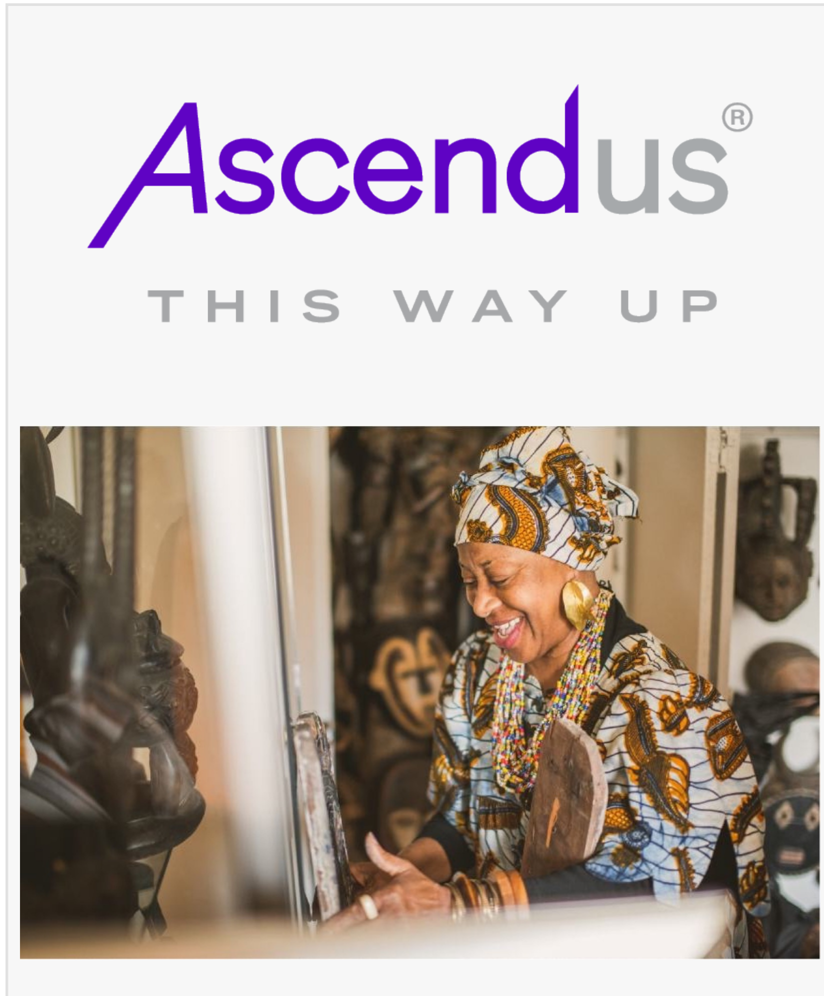
Ascendus, MetLife Foundation and Urban Institute to Examine What Happens After a Small Business Owner Reaches Capital

Getting Ready to Grow: How Small Capital Drives Economic Mobility convenes funders, CDFI practitioners and researchers on September 16 in New York and online.



NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, August 27, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Ascendus, a nationwide Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), will convene Getting Ready to Grow: How Small Capital Drives Economic Mobility on Wednesday, September 16, 2026, with MetLife Foundation and the Urban Institute. The session runs 8:30 to 10:00 a.m. Eastern Time at MetLife, 200 Park Avenue, New York.

The conversation takes up a question the sector usually treats as settled: whether reaching capital is the same thing as moving up. Every lending system has to draw a line somewhere, and the same rules applied evenly still leave capable owners on the other side of it. Get Ready, an Ascendus program launched in 2023 with support from MetLife Foundation, pairs a $500 revolving line of credit with one-on-one financial coaching, and lets borrowers graduate to a $5,000 line after three months of on-time repayment. Personal credit score is not an eligibility requirement.

Tia Hodges of MetLife Foundation moderates. She is joined by Paul Quintero and Neysa Cruceta of Ascendus, Brett Theodos of the Urban Institute, and a Get Ready borrower speaking about their own experience.

What the research found so far

In October 2025 the Urban Institute published Building Credit for Small Business Owners: A Case Study of the Get Ready Program, by Brett Theodos and Amanda Hermans. The study examined access and implementation across 174 borrowers, combining program and pre-loan credit data with interviews. Its findings, as published:

- The average incoming borrower credit score was 571 — below the threshold CDFI lenders typically use.
- As of March 2025, 76% of accounts were in active good standing or had closed with obligations met.
- Of the borrowers evaluated for an increase, 41% moved to the $5,000 line or beyond. Across all 174 borrowers, the figure is 35%.
- 32% of borrowers had household incomes under $30,000, against a national median household income of $78,538 in 2023.
- Six borrowers have moved beyond the program into larger, traditional business loans with Ascendus.

Part One examines access and implementation. It does not measure the program's effect on borrowers' credit scores. A second part of the research, from the Urban Institute, is expected in December 2026.

Registration

The event is open to funders, CDFI practitioners, researchers and policy partners, in person and online. Registration and the full media kit are available at https://www.ascendus.org/. Press inquiries and interview requests: getready@ascendus.org.

About Ascendus

Ascendus is a mission-driven, nationwide Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) with over 35 years of experience empowering small business owners. We provide access to capital and personalized financial coaching to help entrepreneurs achieve financial health and ascend toward lasting success. With deep local impact and national reach, Ascendus has delivered over $435 million in financial support to more than 62,000 entrepreneurs — many from historically overlooked communities. From corner bakeries in the Bronx to beauty salons in Miami, we help build thriving businesses and vibrant neighborhoods, shaping a future of financial ascension for all. https://www.ascendus.org/

About MetLife Foundation

At MetLife Foundation, we are committed to driving inclusive economic mobility around the world. We collaborate with nonprofit organizations and provide grants aligned to three strategic focus areas — economic empowerment, financial health and resilient communities — while engaging MetLife employee volunteers to help drive impact. MetLife Foundation was established in 1976. Since its inception, it has contributed over $1 billion to strengthen communities where

MetLife has a presence. https://www.metlife.org/

About the Urban Institute
The Urban Institute is a nonprofit research organization that provides data and evidence to help advance upward mobility and equity. We are a trusted source for changemakers who seek to strengthen decision-making, create inclusive economic growth, and improve the well-being of families and communities. For more than 50 years, Urban has delivered facts that inspire solutions. https://www.urban.org/

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