

LEADERSHIP IN DEVELOPMENT FINANCE



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Leadership is an important component in economic development finance. At the local, state, and national level, development finance projects and programs require the guidance, oversight, and dedication that accompany effective leadership in order to be successful.

As a key component of New Jersey's Partnership for Action team, the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJ EDA) prides itself on serving as the state's "bank for business" to catalyze job retention and creation and promote economic development across the state. Under the leadership of Governor Chris Christie and Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno, and in conjunction with our Partnership for Action collaborators, the Business Action Center and Choose New Jersey, EDA administers a number of successful programs. These include state incentive programs such as the Business Employment Incentive Program and the Business Retention and Relocation Assistance Grant, as well as tax-exempt bond financing and additional lending programs that target small and mid-sized businesses and the growth of the clean energy and greater technology industries. Through these programs, New Jersey has supported numerous businesses and countless jobs throughout the state.

Whether the challenge is monitoring new programs, identifying best practices, or responding to proposed federal regulations, it helps to be part of an organization that is dedicated to monitoring such developments on a national basis. For the NJ EDA, the Council of Development Finance Agencies is, of course, that organization.

The value we see in CDFFA is particularly evident through the recent—and ongoing—federal challenges to the tax-exempt bond program. These threats have come from all sides. Senators have called for tax credit bonds to not just supplement, but to replace, tax-exempt bonds. Proponents of tax reform have been willing to entirely eliminate the tax exemption.

CDFFA has been a leader for the development finance industry at a crucial time.

Through all of these threats, CDFFA has been an early and clear voice for the critical importance of tax-exempt bond finance. As part of the CDFFA-BNY Mellon Development Finance Webcast Series, the Council has held several national webcasts on the importance of tax-exempt bonds, spreading the message to thousands of webcast attendees throughout the country. CDFFA's Legislative Committee and staff have organized letter-writing campaigns, meetings with Congressional offices, and the *Built by Bonds* publication, which

provides a clear, economic development-based rationale for preserving these financing tools.

In short, CDFFA has been a leader for the development finance industry at a crucial time.

Even when the bedrock financing mechanism of our industry is not being threatened, CDFFA provides leadership. When the U.S. Dept. of the Treasury's State Small Business Credit Initiative was announced, for example, the Council jumped at the opportunity to assist states with the innovative, but complex, program. From holding educational webcasts to connecting program leaders to posting successful applications, CDFFA's support to applying states was invaluable.

A sometimes overlooked form of leadership provided by CDFFA is in the area of best practices. Keeping an eye on the programs and projects being developed throughout the country is an enormous task. By providing outstanding development finance training and regularly adding new documents, case studies, and reports to the Online Resource Database, CDFFA is a key source for best practices guidance on development finance tools.

At the NJ EDA, we are happy to know that CDFFA is ready and willing to be at the forefront of our industry.