

Opportunity Finance Network
Board Candidate Statement
Chuck Wall, Chief Financial Officer
Renaissance Community Loan Fund

Dear OFN Members,

I am honored to be nominated to run for the Board of Directors of Opportunity Finance Network. Presently, I am the Chief Financial Officer for Renaissance Community Loan Fund, a CDFI headquartered in Gulfport, MS, that serves the entire State of Mississippi. Renaissance started after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Mississippi Gulf Coast with a mission of assisting in providing access to affordable housing. Now, over 12 years later, Renaissance has assisted over 1,400 homeowners achieve their dreams, as well as assist over 80 businesses create/retain over 1,000 jobs in a state that is very economically challenged. Also, Renaissance developed a senior citizen apartment complex that supplanted a portion of the rental housing that was lost during the storm.

I came to Renaissance in 2012 without the slightest idea what a CDFI was, nor did I have any experience in the non-profit world. My previous 30 years of experience had been in banking in Illinois, so, this was quite a change. The first few months were very challenging as I tried to grasp what it was that Renaissance did and how we could grow the business after the recovery was completed. The biggest challenge we faced is not unique to many CDFIs, particularly those organizations that are not located in urban areas; we had to figure out how to raise affordable, long-term capital to finance the demand for affordable housing and economic development in Mississippi. Now, add in the dearth of money center banks in Mississippi, and you have quite a challenging environment. During my tenure, the first group to assist Renaissance was OFN as they provided a loan to finance new small businesses. Later, FHLB-Dallas, The First (local bank in Mississippi), Woodforest, Bank of America and US Bank, as well as some foundations, have provided loans to propel the growth of Renaissance and aid its mission of serving the entire State of Mississippi. Working with Kimberly LaRosa, Renaissance's President and CEO, as well as a very dedicated Board, we have more than doubled the staff at Renaissance since I arrived in 2012, and transformed the balance sheet from a 100% grant funded organization to an organization that is largely self-sustaining today. Recently, Renaissance successfully deployed 100% of its New Markets Tax Credit allocation in two transactions (\$15 million in loans), and the fees earned in these transactions have been redeployed in financing other low-income borrowers.

The CDFI Fund has attempted to provide capital to many CDFIs, and, through OFN's successful advocacy to Congress, of which I have had the pleasure of participating, the amount of capital designated for CDFIs continues to grow. However, it is not enough to meet the increasing demand as these pools of capital are oversubscribed and many deserving organizations do not receive what they need. Many large money center banks have increased their commitments to CDFIs, and that is much appreciated. Today, the buzz word is Opportunity Zones/Opportunity Funds and the large unknown is how this will enhance the amount of capital invested in CDFIs to bridge this financing gap. If successful, this new financing tool would provide much needed capital to this industry but many believe it will not reach the CDFIs that exist outside the urban areas.

Other challenges facing Renaissance and other CDFIs include the lack of uniformity guiding the industry, and the access to affordable technology, such as loan, accounting, and impact tracking systems. The lack of uniformity creates issues when outside investors are trying to understand this industry and how best to serve it. Also, the lack of access to affordable technology forces many CDFIs to duplicate efforts

when booking loans and accounting entries, as well as to spend countless hours trying to keep track of the many great impacts provided by the CDFIs. A similar problem existed while I worked at Bank of America, that prompted me to work with a software company to address this issue, and the result was a new software that is used by many in private equity today. Together, we can do this.

If elected to serve on the Board, I will work with OFN in its mission of ensuring low-income, low-wealth, and other underserved people and communities have access to affordable, responsible financial products and services, as Renaissance's efforts in Mississippi is a microcosm of this same mission. This will include working with Congress to increase the amount of funding to The CDFI Fund. However, the CDFIs cannot rely solely on The CDFI Fund to provide this much needed capital, and as such, it will be very important that OFN and its Board continue to work with financial institutions and intermediaries to further address the aforementioned capital shortage. Also, it is very important that this capital reach the smaller CDFIs that do not have access to traditional financial sources, similar to the challenges facing many of the customers we serve in Mississippi. Additionally, I will work with OFN and many CDFIs that have expressed similar issues with technology shortcomings to assist in streamlining this approach and to find common grounds in the existing technology, or work with developers to see if new technology can be developed to serve many of our needs. If successful, this will assist in the uniformity effort.

I trust the experience gained while at Renaissance will prove beneficial to the OFN Board, and I welcome the opportunity to work together with OFN and the other successful current members and future members of The Board. Thank you for this great opportunity to serve you and I encourage you to contact me at any time to discuss any thoughts you have that will benefit this industry.

Sincerely,

Chuck Wall
Renaissance Community Loan Fund