



FORGE LA Fellow

FORGE LA: Financing Options for Recovery, Growth, and Equity in Los Angeles County

Position Type: Part-Time Fellowship (1099 Contractor)

Time Commitment: 20 hours/month for 6 months (120 total hours)

Contract Period: January 2026 – July 2026

Stipend: \$6,000 (\$50/hour)

Location: Hybrid (Remote with occasional in-person meetings in Los Angeles County)

Number of Positions: 2 Fellows

ABOUT THE CENTER BY LENDISTRY

The Center by Lendistry (TCBL) is a nonprofit organization that supports diverse small businesses through education, technical assistance, and access to competitive financing. Our mission is to close the racial wealth gap by anchoring small businesses and the communities where they do business. TCbL is the non-profit educational and technical assistance strategic partner to Lendistry, a minority-led, technology enabled CDFI that provides loans and other financial products to underserved small business owners and homeowners. Our initiatives aim to advance equitable economic development strategies to drive small business growth, job creation, and generational wealth-building in underserved communities across the country.

ABOUT FORGE LA

FORGE LA is a collaborative initiative convening CDFIs across Los Angeles County to develop comprehensive financing strategies for wildfire recovery and redevelopment. This 6-month project responds to the devastating Eaton, Palisades, and other recent wildfires by bringing together financial institutions, research partners, and public stakeholders to create innovative financing solutions and policy recommendations that prioritize low- and moderate-income homeowners, small businesses, and community-serving institutions.

Beyond immediate recovery needs, FORGE LA will create a replicable playbook for future disaster response, helping the CDFI industry develop financing mechanisms and partnerships to be ready when the next disaster hits.

FELLOWSHIP OVERVIEW

The Center by Lendistry seeks two graduate student Fellows to support FORGE LA's working group coordination and research activities. Each fellow will anchor two working groups, providing critical support to our Program Manager in facilitating collaborative discussions, synthesizing insights, and conducting research on disaster recovery financing best practices.

Fellow 1: Single Family Housing & Multifamily Housing Working Groups



Fellow 2: Small Business & Community Facilities Working Groups

This is an exceptional opportunity for graduate students passionate about community development finance, disaster recovery, equitable economic development, and systems-level problem solving to gain hands-on experience in collaborative policy development and financial product innovation.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Working Group Coordination (40% of time)

- Support Program Manager in coordinating 6 monthly working group meetings for assigned asset classes
- Prepare meeting agendas, materials, and background briefings for participants
- Take detailed meeting notes and synthesize key discussion points, recommendations, and action items
- Track participant attendance and engagement
- Follow up with working group members on action items and deliverables
- Maintain organized documentation system for all working group activities

Research and Analysis (35% of time)

- Conduct literature review on disaster recovery financing best practices and case studies from similar wildfires (e.g., Paradise Fire, Camp Fire, Tubbs Fire)
- Research innovative financial products, credit enhancement mechanisms, and tax credit opportunities applicable to assigned asset classes
- Identify and analyze potential partners including government agencies, foundations, financial institutions, and technical assistance providers
- Support data analysis of emergency relief applications and capital needs assessments in collaboration with UCLA Luskin Center and County partners
- Research policy interventions and financing structures from other disaster recovery contexts
- Compile research findings into accessible briefing documents for CDFI partners

Documentation and Knowledge Management (15% of time)

- Synthesize working group recommendations into clear, actionable summaries
- Contribute to development of final work products including white papers and implementation roadmap
- Document emerging best practices and lessons learned throughout the collaborative process
- Create visual presentations and infographics to communicate findings to diverse stakeholders
- Contribute to the creation of a replicable playbook for future disaster recovery efforts

**Stakeholder Coordination (10% of time)**

- Support outreach and coordination with research partners (UCLA Luskin Center, Urban Institute)
- Assist in scheduling and logistics for Lead Partner meetings and cross-working group convenings
- Help prepare materials for engagement with Blue Ribbon Commission and public sector partners
- Support coordination between working groups to identify cross-cutting themes and opportunities

DESIRED SKILLS AND BACKGROUND**Required Qualifications:**

- Currently enrolled in a graduate program (Master's or PhD) in urban planning, public policy, public administration, business administration (MBA), community development, economics, social work, or related field
- Strong research skills with ability to synthesize complex information from multiple sources
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills
- Proven ability to take detailed meeting notes and create clear, organized documentation
- Highly organized with strong attention to detail and ability to manage multiple priorities
- Proficiency in Microsoft Office Suite (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) and Google Workspace
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively in a fast-paced environment
- Commitment to racial equity and economic justice

Preferred Qualifications:

- Familiarity with community development finance, CDFIs, or affordable housing/small business lending
- Understanding of disaster recovery processes and emergency management systems
- Knowledge of Los Angeles County communities and demographics
- Experience with policy analysis and development
- Coursework or research experience in housing finance, community economic development, or public finance
- Experience with data analysis tools (Excel, Stata, R, or similar)
- Background in facilitation or project coordination
- Spanish language proficiency

Ideal Candidate Traits:

- Intellectual curiosity and passion for learning about innovative financing mechanisms
- Systems thinker who can see connections across different asset classes and stakeholders
- Comfortable with ambiguity and adaptive problem-solving



- Strong interpersonal skills and ability to build relationships with diverse partners
- Genuine commitment to supporting equitable wildfire recovery

LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Fellows will gain valuable experience in:

- Community development finance and CDFI operations
- Disaster recovery financing and policy development
- Multi-stakeholder collaboration and facilitation
- Financial product innovation and credit enhancement mechanisms
- Policy advocacy and systems change strategies
- Research methods and applied policy analysis
- Network building with leading CDFIs, research institutions, and public sector partners
- Professional development in the community development and disaster recovery fields

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

- Stipend: \$6,000 total (\$50/hour for 120 hours)
- Flexible scheduling to accommodate academic commitments
- Hybrid work arrangement with occasional in-person meetings in Los Angeles
- Professional development and networking opportunities with CDFI leaders
- Opportunity to co-author publications and presentations on findings

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

To apply, please submit the following materials to ben.greenlea@thecenterbylendistry.org by 01/14/2026:

1. Resume or CV
2. Cover letter (maximum 2 pages) addressing:
 - Your interest in FORGE LA and disaster recovery financing
 - Your preferred working group assignment (Fellow 1: Housing or Fellow 2: Small Business/Community Facilities) and why
 - Relevant coursework, research, or professional experience
 - Your approach to research and coordination work
3. Writing sample (5-10 pages) demonstrating research and analytical skills
4. Two references (name, title, organization, and contact information)

Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. Selected candidates will be invited for interviews in January 2026.