



## **National CRE Diversity & Inclusion Initiative Project REAP Seeks Candidates for Open Access Community Development Fellowship Program**

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New York, NY Project REAP (Real Estate Associate Program), one of the nation's leading efforts to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in the commercial real estate (CRE) industry, is launching Open Access, an initiative to increase diverse representation in community development finance.

The New Markets Tax Credit program within community development finance is dedicated to improving under-resourced and underrepresented communities nationwide, many of which are Black and Latinx areas disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Yet the industry itself is grossly underrepresented by BIPOC professionals on all levels. This across the board talent deficit often deprives organizations of the cultural affinities needed to best understand and relate to the populations they serve while BIPOC professionals remain unaware of career opportunities in the industry and lack access to the marketplace.

"We need to have our industry be more representative of the communities where we work. There is great talent in the market. This is not just the right thing to do, the proper representation influences our allocation of resources, the projects we fund and the impacts we create and achieve in the communities," said Jeff Monge, managing partner of Monge Capital and co-founder of the Open Access initiative with Gina Nisbeth, director, Citi.

Open Access Fellows will benefit from paid fellowships with industry leaders, training, networking, webinars and conference attendance sponsored by Novogradac & Company LLC, to prepare for community development careers in accounting, legal, finance, consultancy, development and related areas. The program will attract and cultivate an initial cohort of economic development talent—professionals seeking to become agents of change, restoration and empowerment in communities of color.

Applicants must have a four-year degree from an accredited institution and be able to commit to 160 hours (20 eight-hour days) over up to 12 weeks from January 18 through April 18, 2021. Applications will open November 24 and will close on Saturday, December 5, 2020 (11:59 pm EST). Accepted candidates will be announced January 2021; training and fellowships begin Monday, January 18, 2021. Sponsors include U.S. Bancorp, Chase, PNC, Citi, Greenline Ventures, Novogradac, Advantage Capital, NTCIC and Monge Capital.

More information can be found at <https://www.projectreap.org/>

