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## California Bank Eyes More Loans to Women and Minority Entrepreneurs

By Alan Kline

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California Bank & Trust in San Diego is aiming to change that — and bolster its own loan portfolio — with a new multi-pronged lending initiative targeting female and minority entrepreneurs.

The \$10.9 billion-asset unit of Zions Bancorporation (ZION) has established a program in which its lenders will educate business owners on what they will need to qualify for loans and guide them through the loan process. California Bank & Trust has dubbed the initiative T.E.A.M., which stands for Tools, Education, Access and Mentoring. It will kick off the program in Los Angeles Thursday at a business event sponsored by Latina Style magazine.

The initiative is geared toward all women- and minority-owned businesses, though the focus at Thursday's event will be on Latina-owned businesses.

Hispanic women in particular have become more entrepreneurial in recent years. According to U.S. Census data, Latinas own 30% of all businesses in the U.S. that are owned by minority women.

"Access to capital is the number one impediment to the growth of small-business owners," Betty Rengifo Uribe, an executive vice president at California Bank & Trust, said in a news release. "Through our network of highly experienced, professional bankers, we can provide expert guidance to minority- and women-owned businesses, giving them the help they need to grow, thrive and become a valuable part of their communities."

California Bank & Trust said the T.E.A.M. program strengthens its commitment to identifying the needs of various communities it serves. The bank has earned an "outstanding" Community Reinvestment Act rating in each of the last four years.

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