

GRAMEEN: Empowering Small Businesses



[Grameen America](#) (GAI) is dedicated to helping low-income entrepreneurs build businesses to enable financial mobility. GAI envisions an inclusive society in which all entrepreneurs, regardless of race, gender, or income, have access to fair and affordable financial services to support upward economic mobility.

Founded in Queens, NY, in 2008, GAI carries forward the visionary model of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Muhammad Yunus. Yunus's transformative concept—that every individual can break the cycle of poverty through their entrepreneurial spirit—has reshaped global perspectives on poverty eradication.

A Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), Grameen America empowers aspiring entrepreneurs with accessible business capital, starting with initial loans of up to \$2,500. Beyond financial support, their comprehensive program includes financial literacy training, peer networking, and weekly loan repayments reported to major credit bureaus, fostering financial independence.

Grameen America's focus remains steadfast on small business owners in underserved communities who often face barriers within the traditional financial system, lacking access to bank loans and credit histories. They have the potential to serve as powerful economic engines, but many are shut out of the mainstream financial system.



Since its inception, Grameen America has disbursed more than \$5 billion, impacting over 220,000 small businesses across the US, maintaining an exceptional repayment rate of 99.9%. Notably, California holds a significant portion of their portfolio, with more than 41,000 entrepreneurs having received cumulative loan disbursements of nearly \$1 billion.

In addition to microfinancing, their initiatives encompass credit-building, savings programs, educational workshops, peer

support, and healthcare navigation, ensuring holistic empowerment for our members.

GAI’s unique group-lending model, in which entrepreneurs support, lead and learn from each other, allows them to disburse large numbers of small loans to reach the most vulnerable populations with reasonable and accessible financial services.

Lucas Ramirez, Chief Financial Officer, emphasizes Grameen America’s decentralized, community-centric approach. “We operate with trust-based lending circles where members collectively approve loans, eliminating the need for traditional financial statements, credit scores, or collateral,” he explained. “With nearly 30 dedicated relationship managers spread across 38 branches, Grameen prioritizes personalized support and weekly engagement with its members.”

"**The Sobrato Organization** serves as a significant partner to Grameen America, playing dual roles in lending and philanthropy," said Lucas. "Partnering with Sobrato enhances Grameen’s philanthropic endeavors by securing catalytic grant capital that boosts lender confidence and strengthens our commitment to sustainable growth initiatives."

Reflecting on his role, Lucas shared, "As CFO, much of my work is behind the scenes, but visiting our members is incredibly inspiring. Witnessing firsthand how Grameen America transforms lives reaffirms the profound impact of our mission. Our success lies in changing life trajectories—one entrepreneur at a time."

You can read stories about the entrepreneurs that Grameen America has supported on their [blog](#).