



Article 418

October 4, 2015

Consultants Help Yarn Cafe Owner Raise Business Profile

By George Kenefic, Director of Enterprise Empowerment, The Loan Fund

About a year after she had secured a small-business startup loan through The Loan Fund, Deborah Grossman got a visit from two consultants who work for the nonprofit lender. The pair — Joaquin Amador and Andrew Carrabus — dropped by Grossman's Santa Fe store, Yarn & Coffee, to ask if she needed help with marketing, financial record keeping or any of the other tasks involved in starting and sustaining a business.

The timing was fortunate. "I was trying to figure out how to get more people in the door," Grossman said of her shop, where people can buy yarn, knitting and crocheting tools and accessories, patterns and books or take a needle-craft class — and enjoy a cup of coffee, tea or cold drink at the same time.



Grossman strives to create a community atmosphere at her business housed in a stand-alone building tucked behind the Pantry Restaurant on Cerrillos Road and Fifth Street. The welcoming environment and comfortable couches have worked: Several groups of knitters and crocheters gather weekly to stitch and socialize.

Amador and Carrabus helped Grossman develop a marketing plan, she said, and "they helped me put together a budget and cash-flow spreadsheet that I use daily. They were reaching out to all the Loan Fund clients. After that, I reached back."

Free Advice From the Experts

To increase a business's odds of surviving startup and evolving into a sustainable enterprise, The Loan Fund offers a range of personalized business services at no cost to its existing clients and even to prospective borrowers.

At least once a year — and more often if the client requests it — the lender's professional consultants visit borrowers to gauge the business's performance and help the owner improve marketing and promotion, financial management, record keeping or website development. They

also help aspiring entrepreneurs prepare loan applications and develop business, strategic and financial plans.

“We have both been in business for ourselves and share decades of operational expertise with our Loan Fund clients,” said Amador. “We can provide advice and guidance concerning just about any conceivable business issue, but we always begin with the issues that a business owner believes are priorities.”

Grossman, for example, needed help formalizing her business budget and adapting to seasonal fluctuations in customer interest. She improved her Internet profile to attract “yarn tourists,” serious crocheters and knitters who shop for regional yarns and associated products wherever they travel.

Listening to the Pros

Grossman now calls the consultants monthly. “I recently started a rewards program,” she said. “I was reluctant, but then I decided to do it. When putting the parameters together, I had Joaquin review the rules. It started at the beginning of August, and it’s good. People love it.”

Consulting services are part of The Loan Fund’s stated mission “to provide loans and assistance to improve the economic and social conditions of New Mexicans.” After all, when a business borrower succeeds and repays the loan, those funds become available to other entrepreneurs, including those who might not qualify for a loan from a traditional lender.

Funding from the New Mexico Small Business Investment Corporation, USDA Rural Development, the Small Business Administration and private donations to The Loan Fund make that assistance possible. For more information, visit www.loanfund.org or call 505-243-3196.

Finance New Mexico is a public service initiative to assist individuals and businesses with obtaining skills and funding resources for their business or idea. To learn more, go to www.FinanceNewMexico.org. Sponsored by:

