



IFF to open Milwaukee office for lending to nonprofits

By [John Schmid](#) of the Journal Sentinel

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As bank lending slows, a Chicago-based financial group that focuses on below-market-rate loans to health clinics, shelters and other nonprofit groups announced it would open a new office in Milwaukee.

"There's no question that our pipeline is up because banks are pulling back," said Trinita Logue, the chief executive and founder of IFF, a 20-year-old lender that previously called itself the Illinois Facilities Fund.

Demands on health services and social agencies have been increasing as the economy deteriorates, according to the IFF.

The IFF limits its lending to below-market real-estate loans for nonprofit organizations that serve low-income communities. It's based on LaSalle St. in the heart of Chicago's financial district. IFF spokeswoman Kate Roberts likened the agency to George Bailey, whose savings and loan helped the working poor in the 1946 movie, "It's a Wonderful Life."

"A lot of loans that would have gone to banks in the past are coming to us," Logue said. "That's definitely related to the credit crunch."

The IFF changed its name last year when it decided to expand into states that surround Illinois.

As of September, the IFF said it had provided 642 loans that total \$205 million to 367 nonprofit organizations in Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Missouri and Wisconsin. Its interest income covers the cost of its loan program, putting it in a different category from many social agencies that rely solely on grants, donations or taxpayers.

It will open the Milwaukee office early next year. It has begun interviewing candidates in the city to run the new office.

IFF, which said it already dispatches loan officers to Milwaukee twice a week, has made 16 loans within Wisconsin that total more than \$6.6 million to groups like Southeastern Youth & Family Services Inc., a Milwaukee-based agency that assists at-risk youth; and the Wisconsin Regional Training Partnership, which helps recruit and retrain low-income workers.

It is capitalizing its expansion into other Midwestern states with \$5.5 million that it won in the 2008 Wachovia NEXT Awards for Opportunity Finance, an annual prize from the Wachovia Foundation and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation that goes to lenders engaged in social enterprise. In August, it also won a \$1 million award from the U.S. Treasury Department's Community Development Financial Institution Fund.

Both of those awards add to its lending base.

Examples of the services that IFF has supported include charter schools, health clinics, child-care centers, drug and alcohol counseling, job training and housing for the mentally ill, Logue said.