

Ascend^{us}® + Finexus

Leveraging AI to Transform Small Business Lending Operations



Client Overview

Ascendus is a mission-driven Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) dedicated to providing small business loans and financial support to historically underserved entrepreneurs. With a national footprint and a bold commitment to economic equity, Ascendus plays a critical role in expanding access to capital for business owners who might otherwise be excluded from traditional financial systems.

Background

As Ascendus scaled its operations to meet the growing demand for inclusive lending—particularly through state and federal initiatives such as SSBCI and SPV programs—it became clear that its existing loan origination infrastructure could no longer keep pace. Manual underwriting processes, disconnected data systems, and limited automation were increasingly bottlenecking operations. Staff time was being consumed by repetitive tasks, error-prone data entry, and fragmented workflows, rather than focused on strategic, client-facing work. At the same time, the organization was seeing more sophisticated fraud threats, underscoring the need for better verification tools and risk controls.

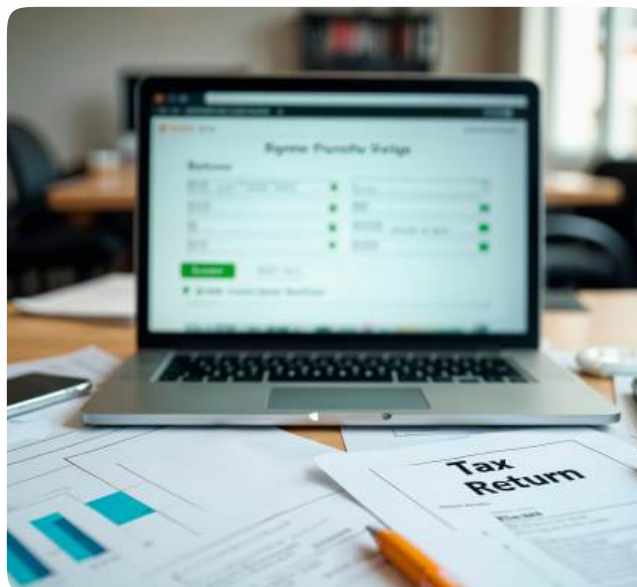
The Challenge

Ascendus needed a modern, end-to-end loan origination system that could handle higher application volumes, improve risk detection, accelerate turnaround times, and maintain the high compliance standards expected of a regulated CDFI. The organization's goals included reducing underwriting time, expanding approval capacity, increasing transparency across teams, and protecting against fraudulent applications—all while maintaining affordability and mission alignment.

The Solution: Finexus AI-Powered Loan Origination System

To meet these goals, Ascendus partnered with Finexus Inc., selecting their AI-driven loan origination system to transform how loans are assessed, processed, and managed. Finexus delivered a fully integrated solution that brought together real-time cash flow analysis, automated underwriting workflows, and advanced fraud mitigation tools.

Through the integration of Plaid, Dwolla, and a suite of proprietary APIs, Finexus enabled Ascendus to automate key underwriting functions, including cash flow modeling, bank account verification, and program-based credit scoring. This real-time data intelligence allowed the lending team to analyze borrower files more quickly and more accurately, supporting smarter credit decisions and increased approval rates.



In parallel, Finexus deployed automation flows that streamlined previously manual steps such as the generation of promissory notes, tracking underwriting-to-lending handoffs, and capturing impact metrics like annual surveys and financial health scores.

Importantly, the partnership also focused on enhancing fraud detection. Finexus introduced tools for email verification, bank account token validation, and ID checks via Plaid and Dwolla. Ascendus also began testing AI-powered document analysis solutions to flag tampered PDFs—an especially important enhancement given a prior fraud case that nearly cost the organization over \$100,000. These tools now allow Ascendus to identify fraud risks earlier in the application process, with greater accuracy and confidence.

As part of the modernization, Finexus also launched a customer self-service portal. Ascendus valued the fast, cost-effective delivery of a clean, intuitive portal that set the stage for future borrower experience upgrades.

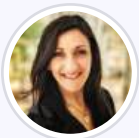
Results and Impact

Within six months of implementation, Ascendus aims to achieve significant improvements in loan operations and risk management. Underwriting time is expected to decrease by 60%, reducing average review periods from about ten days to only four. Loan officer productivity is projected to increase by 40%, as automated workflows enable staff to process more files in less time. Approval rates are anticipated to improve by 20%, thanks to better visibility into borrower cash flows and more precise scoring.

The return on investment goes beyond just performance metrics. Business and compliance reporting will see a 50% reduction in staff time needed, freeing up capacity for strategic and client-focused work. Manual disbursement errors will be cut by at least 75% through integrating Dwolla. Simultaneously, automating recurring tasks—such as survey delivery and document creation—will save over \$120,000 annually. Most importantly, improved fraud detection tools will help Ascendus prevent potential six-figure financial losses due to default.

Client Testimonial

The Ascendus team shared high praise for the collaboration, stating:



“Working with Finexus for our AI based loan management system has been a game-changer. They've been nimble, affordable, and incredibly smart in helping us advance our technology without breaking our budget. From addressing critical pain points to optimizing our existing systems, we've consistently felt supported and understood—a rare combination in tech partnerships. Finexus isn't just a vendor—they're a true partner in our mission.”

JENNIFER SPAZIANO

SVP Operations & Innovation, Ascendus

Looking Ahead

With the foundational system in place, Ascendus and Finexus are continuing to innovate. Future improvements include expanding the customer portal, implementing advanced AI for document fraud detection, and further automating compliance workflows. Together, the two organizations are not only improving operational efficiency but also reshaping the future of inclusive lending. By leveraging AI and automation thoughtfully and affordably, Ascendus is positioned to serve more borrowers, with more precision and greater impact than ever before.



About Finexus Inc.

Finexus Inc. is a technology company specializing in AI-powered solutions for lenders, brokers, and capital providers. By combining real-time data intelligence with advanced risk modeling, Finexus helps institutions make faster, fairer, and more informed lending decisions.

To learn more, visit www.finexus.ai.