



Benchmarking the Performance of Business Development Services

By Elaine Edgcomb
and Tamra Thetford

September 2012

*This guide was updated
by Lavanya Mohan in
September 2016*



FIELD
at the Aspen Institute



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September 2016 to reflect changes to
microTracker.org*

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How do your business development services compare to others in the microenterprise field?

- Are you reaching disadvantaged markets in line with your peers working in similar markets?
- Are you on par in terms of the number of individuals assisted?
- Is your program effective in enabling clients to achieve mastery of key business content?
- Are you more or less efficient than other business development service providers?
- How does your cost recovery compare?

MicroTracker.org provides data that can enable your organization to address these questions, comparing your business development services and activities to those of the industry as a whole, as well as to key peer groups or organizations. Specifically, the microTracker site enables you to benchmark your organization to other business development services providers using the following key indicators:

Target Markets:

- Percent of individuals served that are women
- Percent of individuals served that are minorities
- Percent of individuals served that are low- to moderate-income individuals (at or below 80% of the HUD Median)
- Percent of individuals served that are low-income individuals (at or below 150% of the HHS Poverty Standard)
- Percent of individuals served that are pre-business at intake
- Percent of individuals served in business at intake

Scale of Business Development Services:

- Number of individuals receiving training and technical assistance
- Types of business development services offered
- Average hours of training/technical assistance provided to individuals

Effectiveness of Business Development Services:

- Training completion rate
- Business plan completion rate

Efficiency:

- Cost per individual assisted
- Cost per client

Clients are a subset of all individuals served. They represent those who receive substantial services from a program, and on whom programs expect to observe outcomes as a result of their program participation.

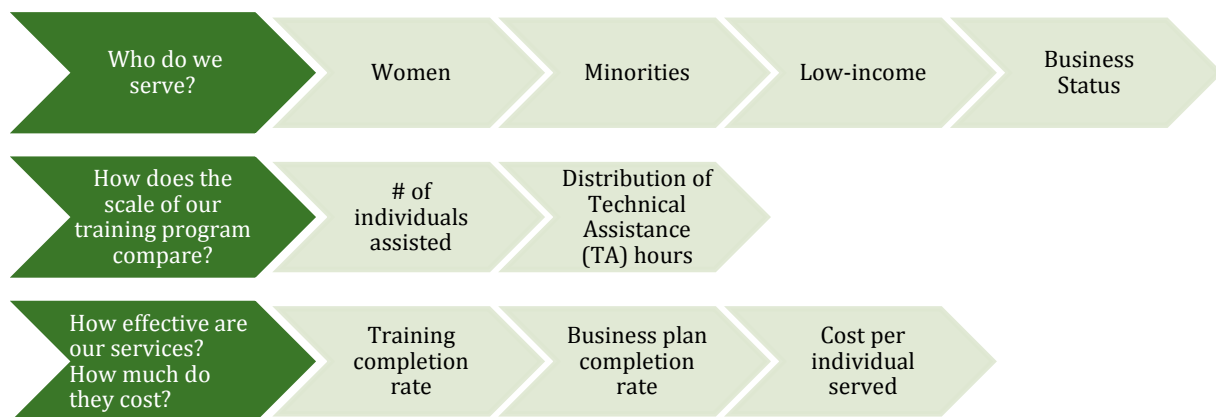
Cost Recovery:

- Percent of business development services expenses covered by earned revenues

This guide illustrates a step-by-step process that organizations engaged in business development services can use to generate benchmarking data related to these services on the microTracker site and through consulting services with microTracker staff.

Step 1: What do you want to know?

As described in the introduction to this guide, there are several key questions a manager may have about the performance and efficacy of a business development services program. Which questions are most important to you? Being clear on the questions you have about your own program ensures you select the right indicators and later choose the right points for comparison. Pull together your key questions and determine which measures help you answer these questions.



Step 2: What comparisons do you want to make?

- Entrepreneurs served: 17
- Cost per client: \$1,300

Numbers by themselves are of limited use. Comparing them to something helps put those numbers in context. If you know you assisted 17 entrepreneurs and the median for the industry is 300 you might feel you have work to do. If your cost per client figure is \$1,300 and for other small, young, training-led programs it is \$2,600, you are likely to assess that you are cost effective.

Do you just want to know how you compare to the overall microenterprise industry, or are you particularly interested in how you compare to other mature organizations or those with two or fewer full-time staff? Perhaps you are determined to be the best at something and you want to focus on a specific measure.

Common Comparisons

- **All programs reporting:** gives you the broadest look at the field with data for all programs reporting on that measure.
- **Program focus:** distinguishes between an organization's main line of business – lending or training.
- You can also cut the data by **Geography, Budget, Staff Size, Volume** etc.

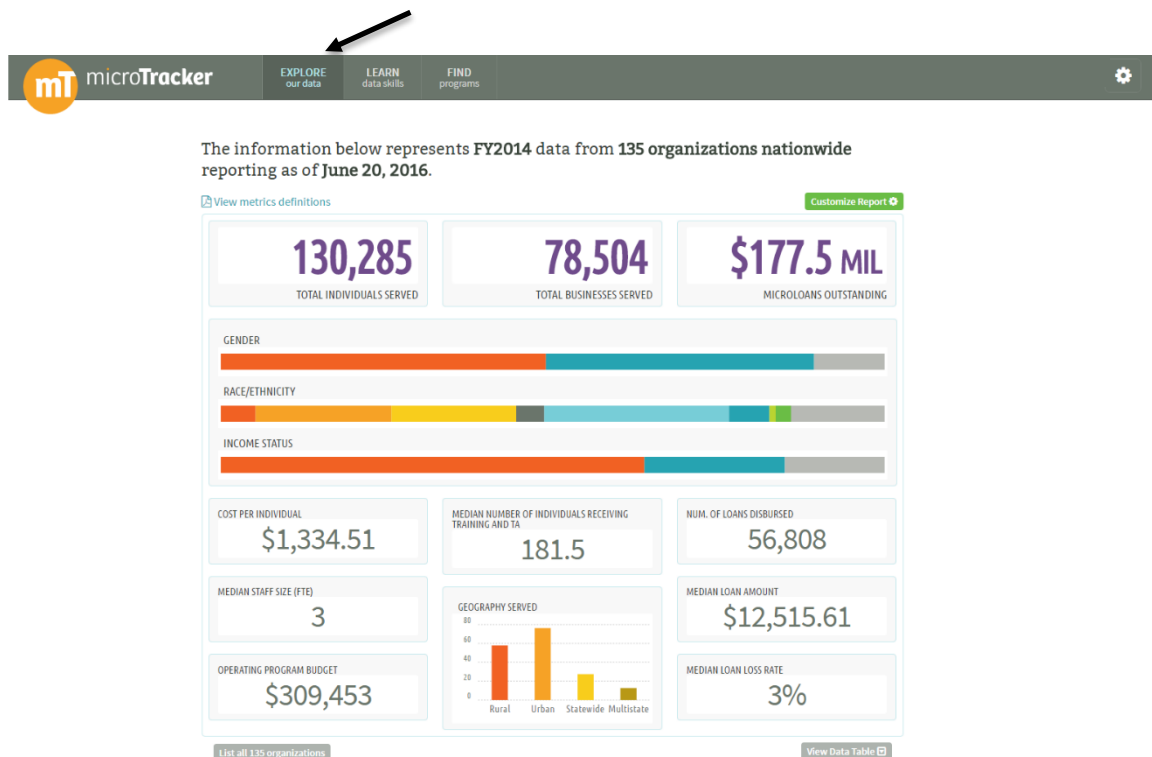
Step 3: Organize the data

You can set up a simple table that lists your selected measures and has a column for your program's data as well as columns for the peer comparisons you have selected.

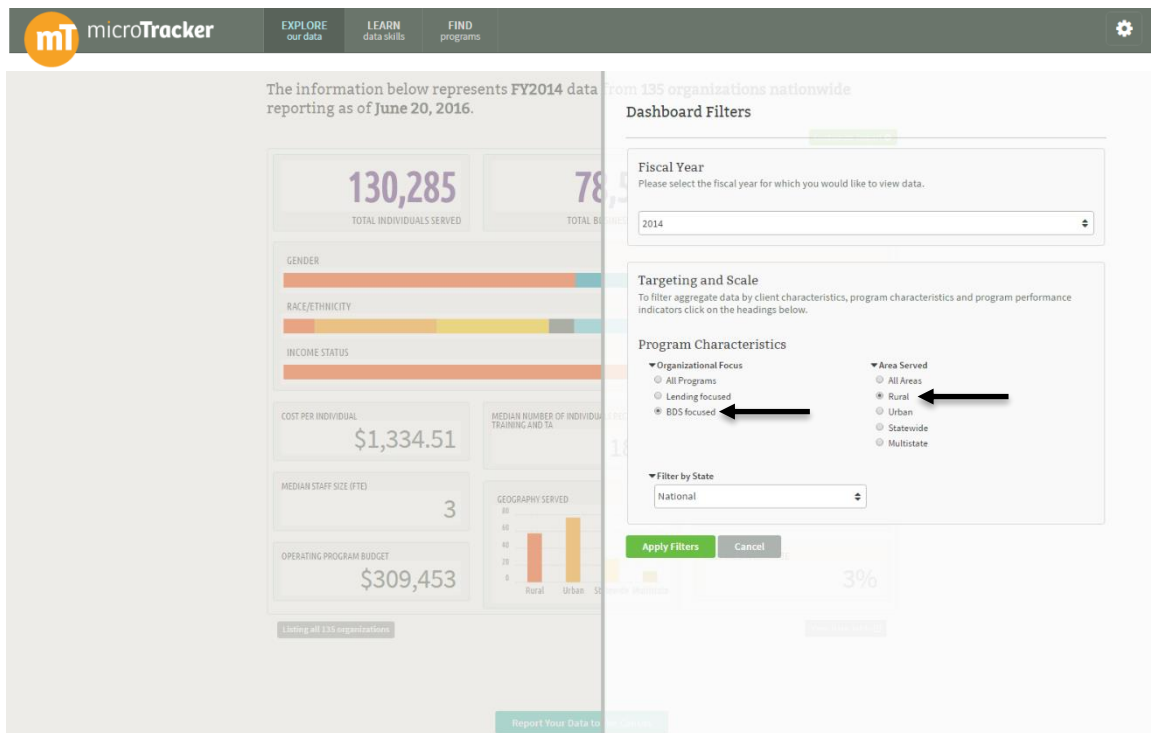
Measure	Your organization 2014	Rural Programs (national median)	Mature Programs (11+ Years Old) (national median)
# of Clients Served			
# of Individuals Served			
% Women Served			
Low Income - 80% HUD			
Low Income – 150% HHS			
Training Completion Rate			
Formal Business Plan Completion Rate			
Cost per Client			
Cost per Individual			

Step 4: Mine the data

It is easier to take the data in sections — start by pulling together the data on scale and targeting to see how you might compare to the peer groups you have selected. On the microTracker site, select the “EXPLORE our data” option in the microTracker navigation bar. Then select “Industry Data.” You will come to a page that provides nationwide data reported by microenterprise development organizations. You can view key statistics from programs across the industry that have reported data to microTracker.

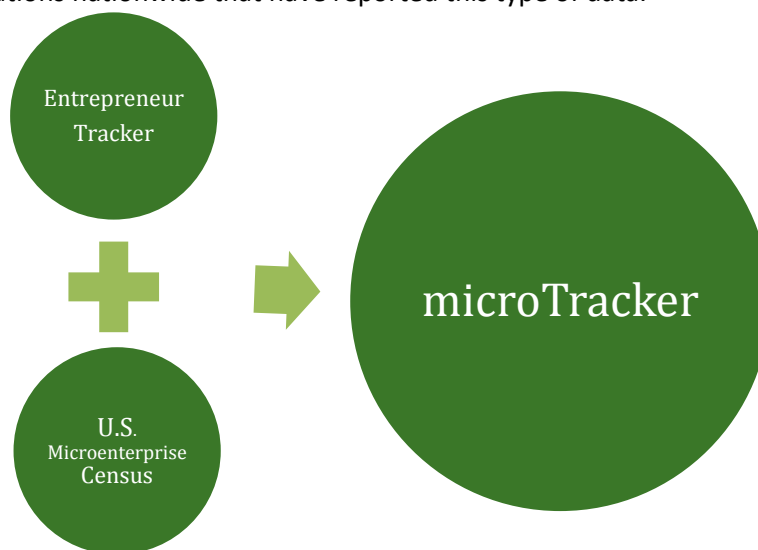


By selecting the “Customize Report” feature, a dashboard of filters will pop up. Here you can filter the industry data by year, program characteristics, area served, and state. For example, if your microenterprise development organization is 15 years old and located in a rural area, you can choose to view key indicators of reporting nationwide programs that are training-led, or focused on business development services (BDS), and that serve rural areas.

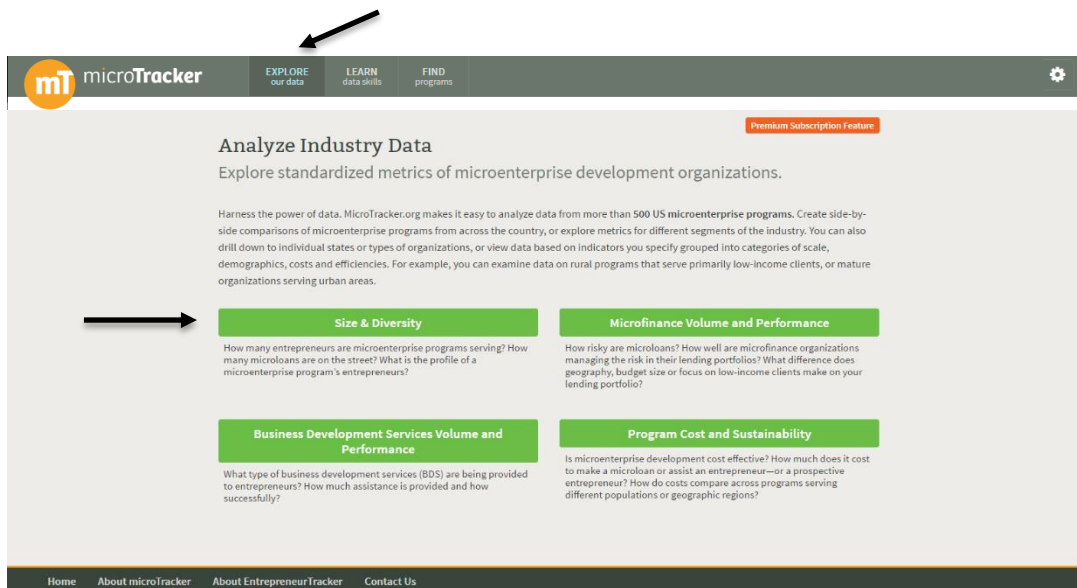


What's the difference between microTracker and the US Microenterprise Census?

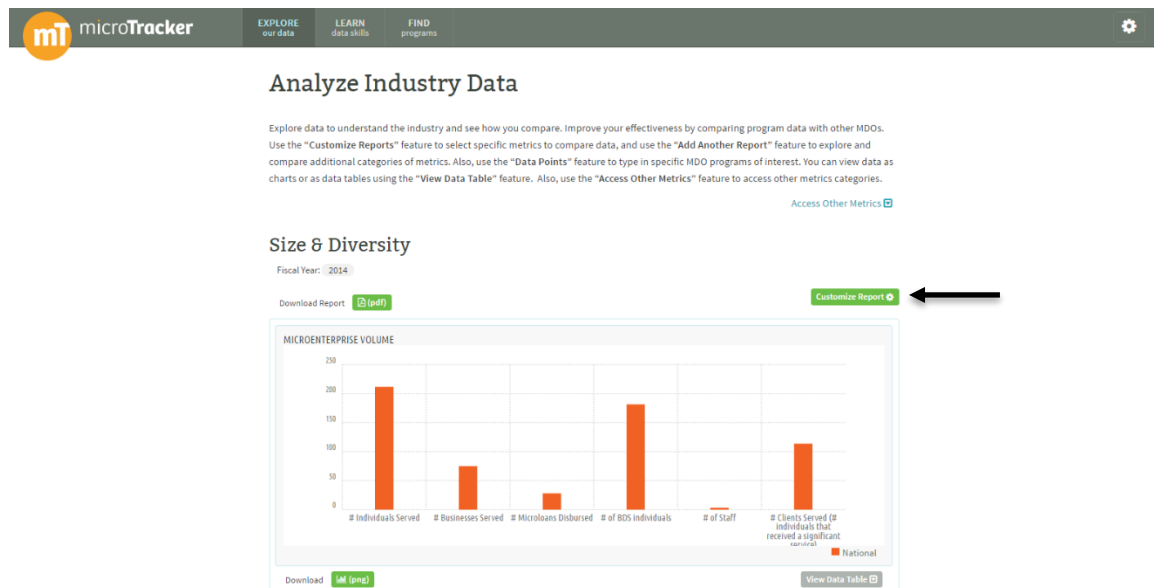
- **MicroTracker, previously known as MicroTest** is a long-running data collection effort that captures both performance and outcome measures submitted by microenterprise organizations across the country. It also includes a set of data tools and services that assist microenterprise development organizations (MDOs) to assess and improve their effectiveness. MicroTracker improves an MDO's ability to collect and understand how to use high-quality, rigorous data. It also allows organizations to track, compare and benchmark program and client outcome metrics over time, and compared to relevant industry peers, other MDOs in a state, or to the industry as a whole.
- **US Microenterprise Census** has been conducted periodically since 1992. The census, as its name implies, attempts to capture MDO performance data from a large segment of the industry. These data set fuel the "Industry Data" and "Analyze Industry Data" tools on the microTracker site and allows for comparison among a wide group of organizations nationwide that have reported data.
- **EntrepreneurTracker** captures data on the outcomes of clients who receive services from MDOs. The data are collected by organizations that participate in MicroTracker's annual client outcomes survey, which uses a common survey and set of data collection and cleaning protocols. The data from the survey fuel the "Entrepreneur Data" and "Analyze Entrepreneur Data" tools on microTracker.org. The site creates an aggregated data set that describes the experiences of MDOs' clients and allows for comparisons across organizations nationwide that have reported this type of data.

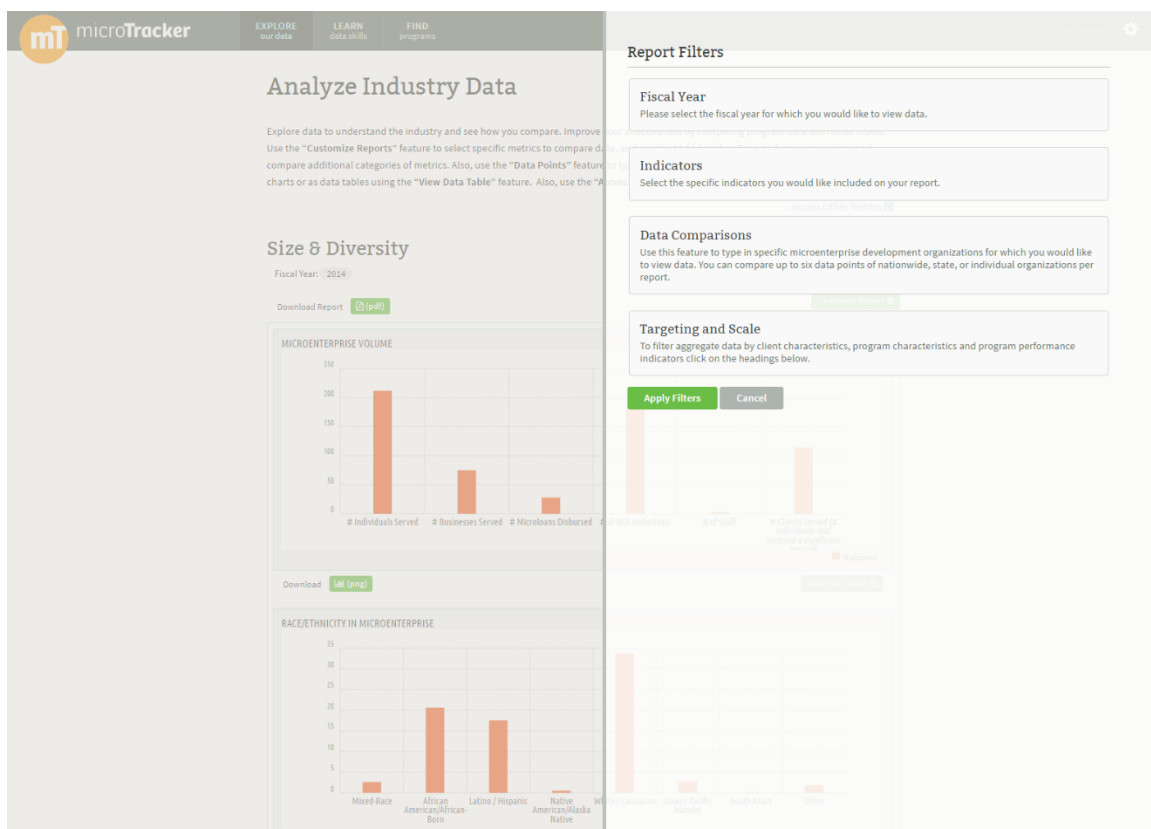


To mine all of the specific data categories you are interested in, scroll down to the “Analyze Industry Data” section and select the “Size & Diversity” category to explore the targeting and scale measures.



You will then land on the report builder page for the “Size & Diversity” data category. You will see national data on size and diversity measures. Select the “Customize Report” tool so you can select the indicators relevant to your specific questions and filter the results in custom ways. The national industry data are pulled from data submitted by microenterprise development organizations (MDOs) through the US Microenterprise Census.





You can select the “Fiscal Year” filter, which provides a drop-down menu that lists all of the fiscal years for which data are available. You can also select the “Indicators” filter to choose the indicators you are interested in learning about.

Report Filters

Fiscal Year

Please select the fiscal year for which you would like to view data.

2014

Indicators

Select the specific indicators you would like included on your report.

[View metrics definitions](#)

Clear All Indicators

Microenterprise Volume

- ☒ # Individuals Served
- ☒ # Businesses Served
- ☒ # Microloans Disbursed
- ☐ # of BDS individuals
- ☒ # of Staff
- ☒ # Clients Served (# individuals that received a significant service)

Race/Ethnicity in Microenterprise

- ☒ Mixed-Race
- ☒ African American/African-Born
- ☒ Latino / Hispanic
- ☒ Native American/Alaska Native
- ☒ White / Caucasian
- ☒ Asian / Pacific Islander
- ☒ South Asian
- ☒ Other

Microenterprise Diversity

- ☒ % Minorities
- ☒ % Women
- ☒ % Individuals with Disabilities

Microenterprise Business Status

- ☒ % Pre-Business
- ☒ % Start-Up (% businesses less than 1 year at intake)
- ☒ % On-Going (% businesses 1+ years at intake)

Low-Income Status

- ☒ % Low-Income, 150% HHS
- ☒ % Low Income, 100% HHS
- ☒ % Low-Income, 80% HUD
- ☒ % TANF

Data Comparisons

Use this feature to type in specific microenterprise development organizations for which you would like to view data. You can compare up to six data points of nationwide, state, or individual organizations per report.

Targeting and Scale

To filter aggregate data by client characteristics, program characteristics and program performance indicators click on the headings below.

Apply Filters

Cancel

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To fill out your data table, choose fiscal year 2014 and check the indicators you are interested in. To fill out your data table, you would select the following indicators: “# Individuals Served,” “# Clients Served,” “% Women,” “% Low-Income, 150% HHS,” and “% Low-Income, 80% HUD.”

Report Filters

Fiscal Year

Please select the fiscal year for which you would like to view data.

2014

Indicators

Select the specific indicators you would like included on your report.

[View metrics definitions](#)

Select All Indicators

Microenterprise Volume

- ☒ # Individuals Served
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- ☐ Other

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Low-Income Status

- ☒ % Low-Income, 150% HHS
- ☐ % Low Income, 100% HHS
- ☒ % Low-Income, 80% HUD
- ☐ % TANF

Next you can choose specific **individual programs** to compare against all MDOs that have submitted data to microTracker. You likely will want to see how your own program's results compare to industry results or identify other organizations to benchmark your data against. You may also want to compare to other organizations in your state, peer or sub-groups of organizations with similar characteristics, or specific organizations to benchmark your data. Use the "Data Comparisons" filter to type in up to six data points which can include national data, your program's data, other peer programs' data, or state-specific data.

Data Comparisons

Use this feature to type in specific microenterprise development organizations for which you would like to view data. You can compare up to six data points of nationwide, state, or individual organizations per report.

National x California (CA) x california

770 L Street, Suite 900 Sacramento, CA 95814

California Resources and Training (CARAT)
436 14th Street, Suite 425 Oakland, CA 94612

California Native Entrepreneur Opportunity Fund
738 North Market Blvd Sacramento, CA 95834

California Coastal Rural Development Corporation
221 Main St. 3rd Floor Salinas, CA 93901

Finally, you can further refine your data search to meet your needs. For example if your organization is interested in benchmarking against other **rural** BDS-focused programs and other **mature** BDS-focused programs that have been operating for more than 11 years, you could first filter the data to see the results of BDS-focused programs that indicate they operate in **rural areas**, and later filter for **mature** programs.

Targeting and Scale

To filter aggregate data by client characteristics, program characteristics and program performance indicators click on the headings below.

Program Characteristics

▼ Organizational Focus

- ☐ All Programs
- ☐ Lending focused
- ☒ BDS focused

▼ Area Served

- ☐ All Areas
- ☒ Rural
- ☐ Urban
- ☐ Statewide
- ☐ Multistate

▼ Organizational Type

- ☒ All Types
- ☐ CDC
- ☐ CDFI
- ☐ Credit Union
- ☐ Stand-Alone
- ☐ CAA
- ☐ Network
- ☐ Other

▼ Staff Size

- ☒ All Sizes
- ☐ Fewer than 2 FTEs
- ☐ 2-5 FTEs
- ☐ Greater than 5 FTEs

▼ Program Age

- ☒ Any Age
- ☐ 0-5 Years Old
- ☐ 6-10 Years Old
- ☐ 11+ Years Old

Program Performance Indicators

- ▶ Program Scale
- ▶ Demographics

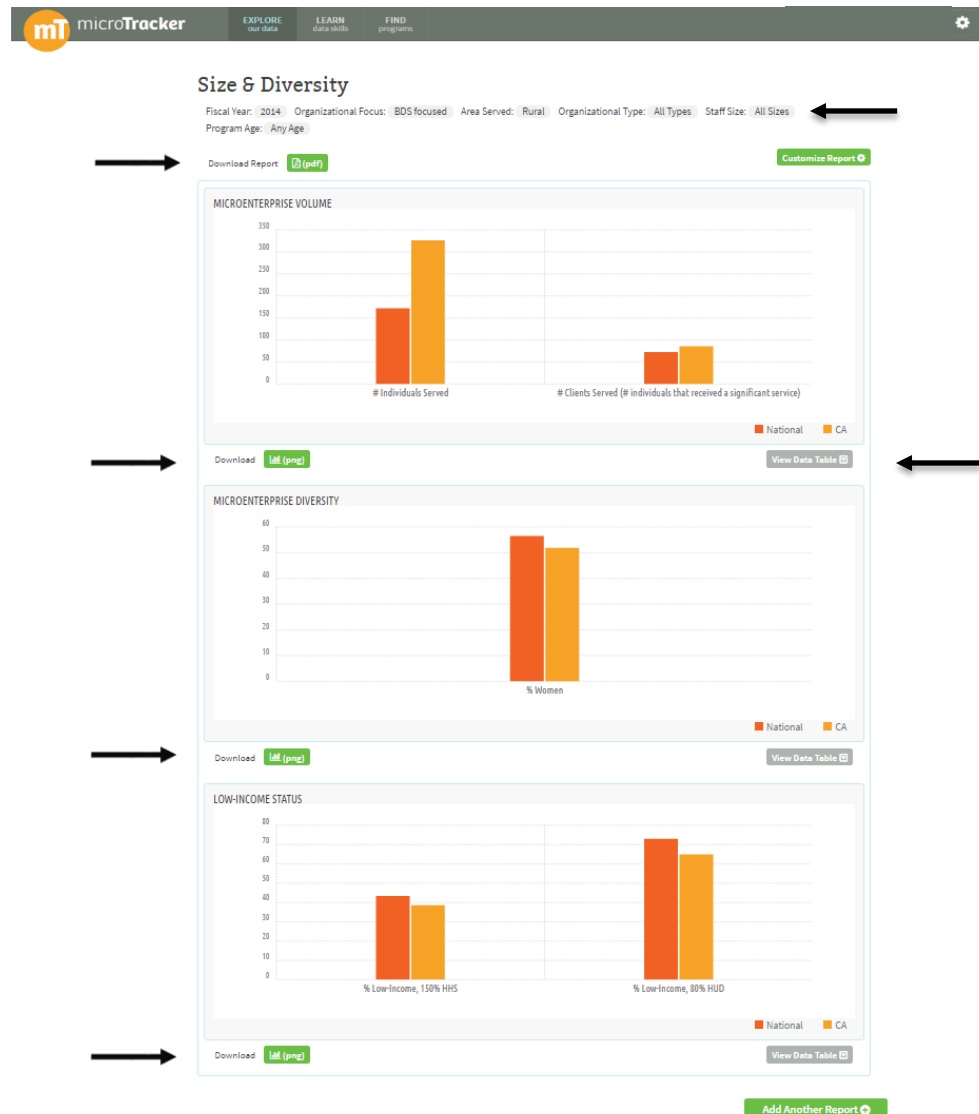
Apply Filters

Cancel

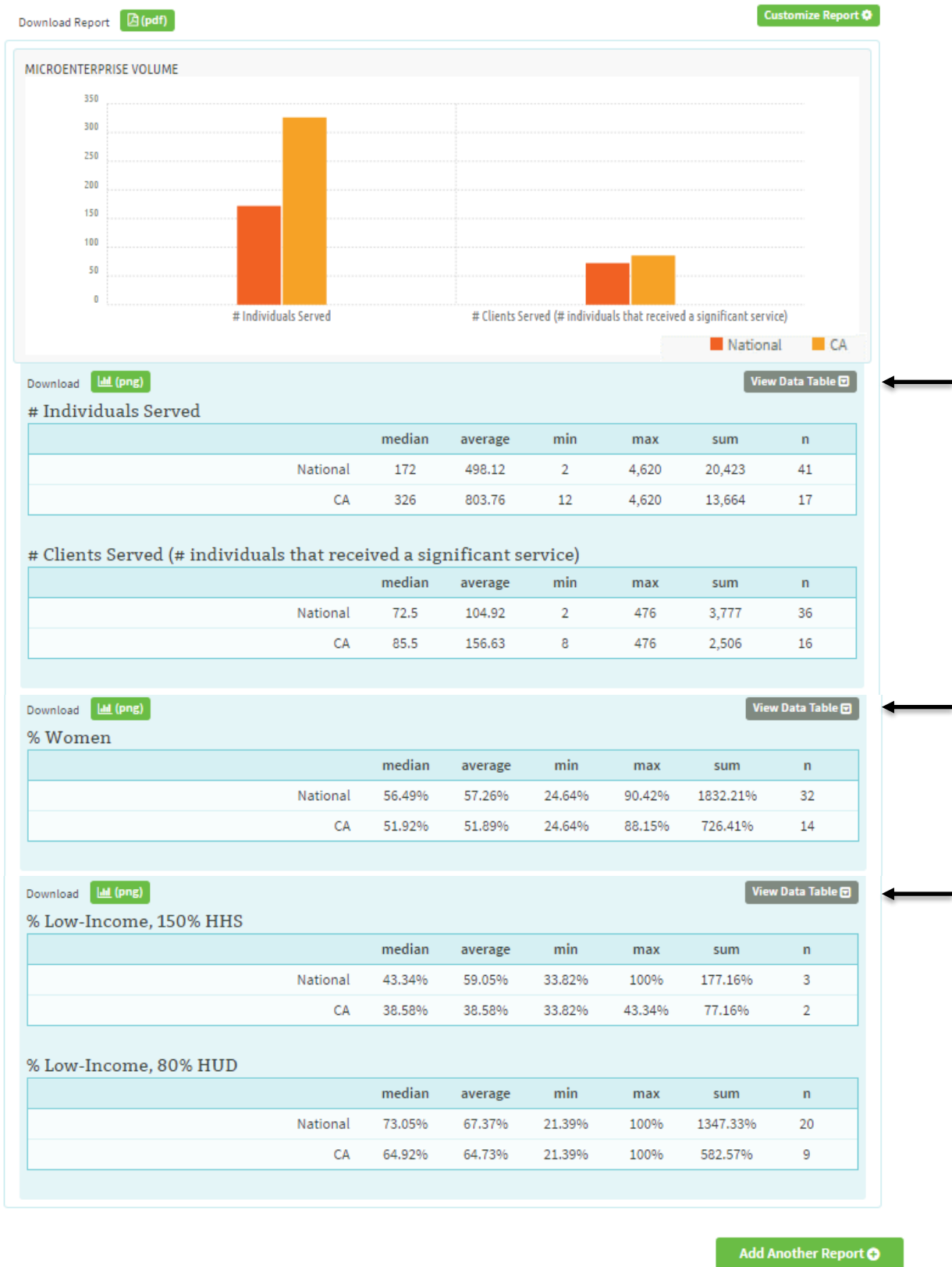
Remember, there are many other ways you can refine “Size & Diversity” data to generate comparisons to programs similar to your own – for example, comparing your organization to those with similar budget or staff sizes, or that serve similar percentages of minorities or women – and many others.

Tip! Start by choosing one or two indicators to see the size of the pool that you are trying to evaluate.

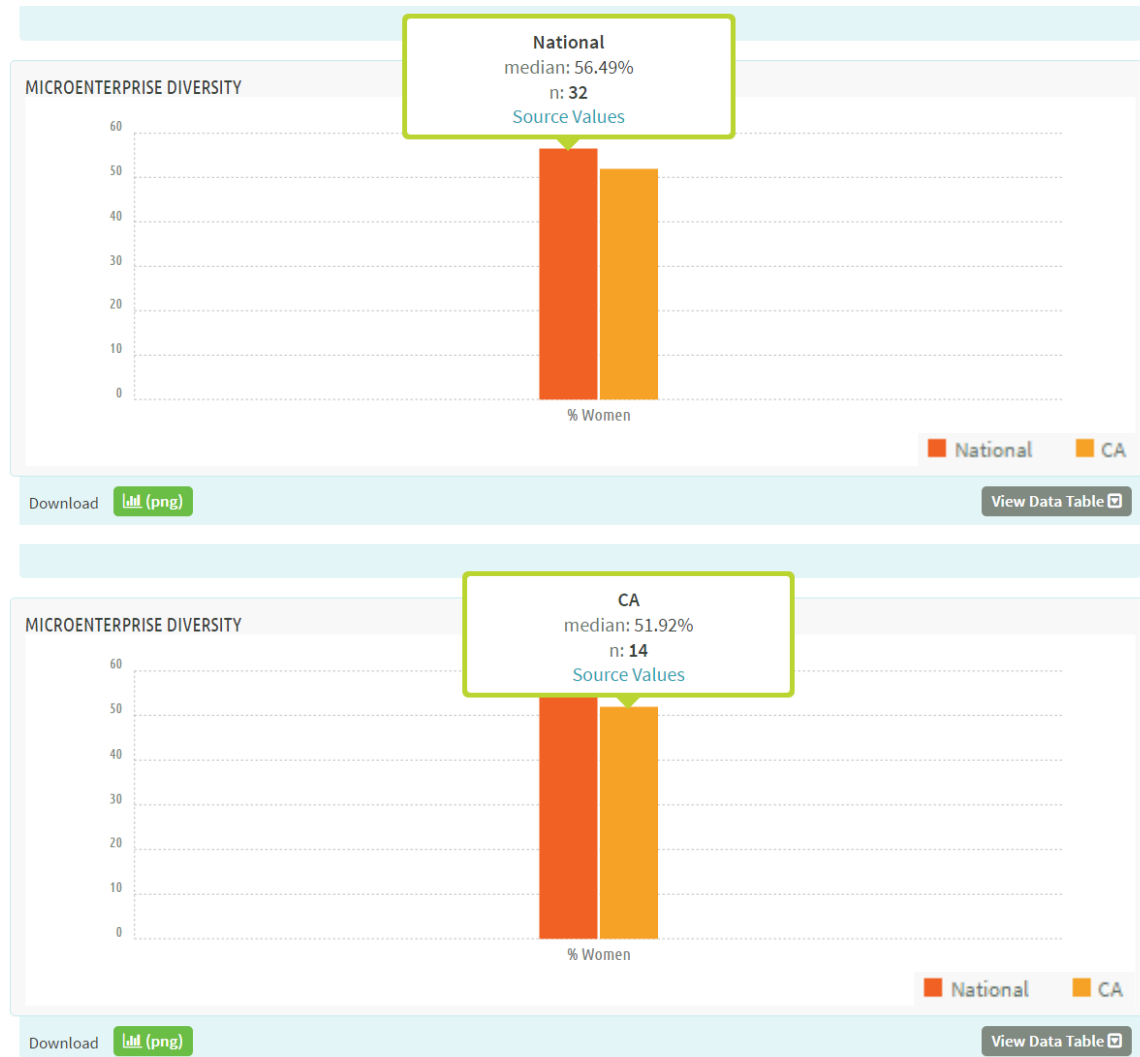
The results display in graph form. In the example below, you are viewing indicator data of California’s BDS-focused rural programs in comparison to all BDS-focused rural programs nationwide. These filters are displayed under the “Size & Diversity” title. You can use your cursor to hover over the bars to see the indicator values. Additionally, you can also select the “View Data Table” feature to view the data as a table. Furthermore, you can download the data as a PDF report or the graphs as images. Remember that typing in your organization or selected peer organizations in the “Data Comparisons” section of the report will add additional bars to the charts below, allowing you to compare across national geographical regions and specific MDO programs at a single glance.



When you select the “View Data Table” feature, you will see the full results for your selected measures in table format.

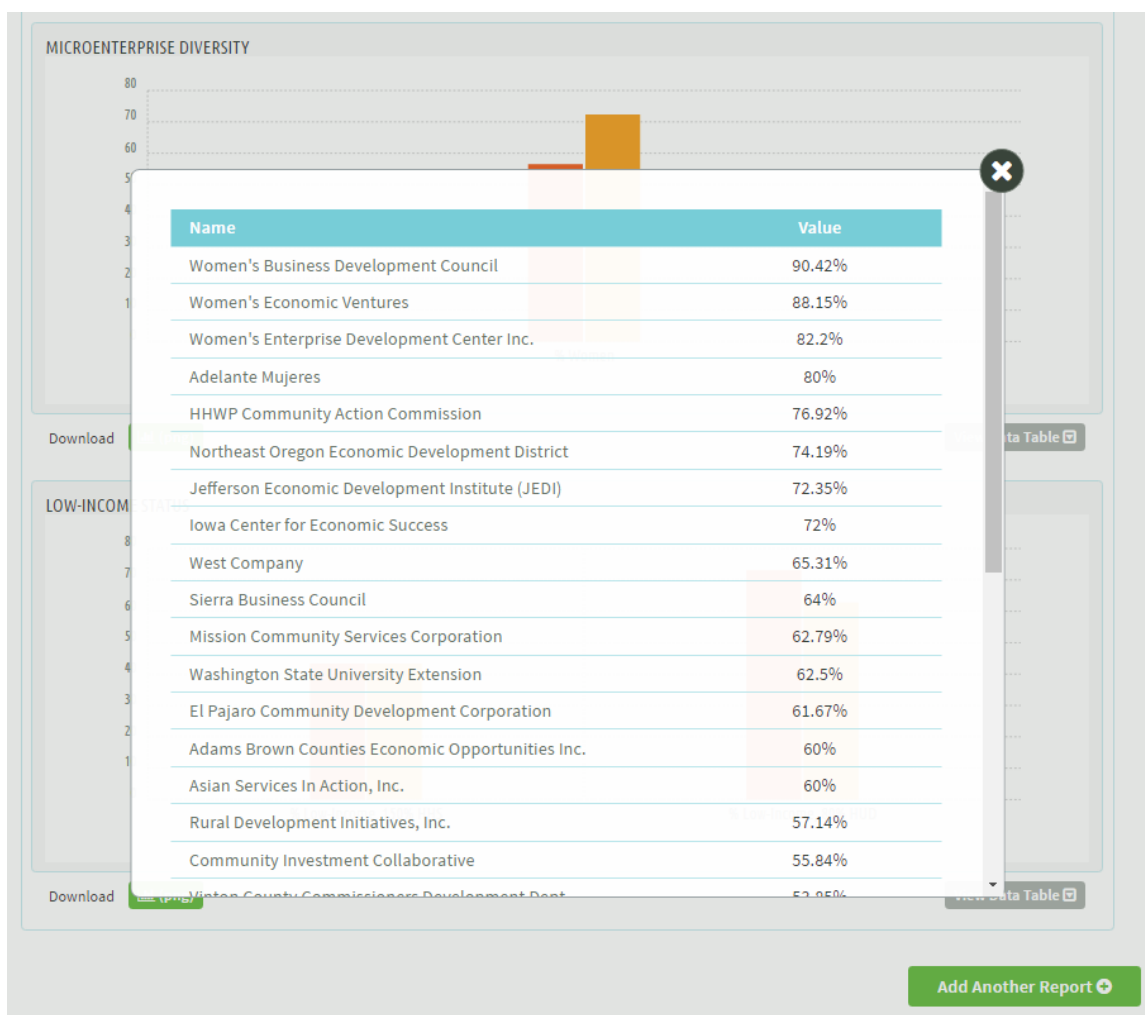


If you **hover over the each bar**, you can view the median indicator values for California BDS-focused rural programs compared with all other BDS-focused rural organizations nationwide that report on each measure. In this example, the percent of women out of total individuals served in 2014 by California's BDS-focused rural programs was 51.92 percent. For the other 32 BDS-focused rural organizations that reported data to microTracker in 2014, the percent of women out of total individuals served was 56.49 percent.



You can also go one step further. If you double click on the national data bar in red, you will see a pop-up that lists the 32 BDS-focused rural microenterprise development organizations that reported the percent of women they served in 2014 to microTracker.

Tip! This is also an excellent way of finding individual organizations against which to benchmark your organization.



Using the graphs and data tables, you can fill in the “Size & Diversity” indicators for the rural column. Then you can move on to filter for mature BDS-focused programs in all areas that have been operating for more than 11 years, serving as a second peer comparison group. Select to expand the “Customize Report” filters, select “All Areas,” and then select “11+ Years Old” for the program age characteristic. If you want to generate data for BDS-focused programs that are both rural and operating for more than 11 years, you could select both options simultaneously.

Data Comparisons

Use this feature to type in specific microenterprise development organizations for which you would like to view data. You can compare up to six data points of nationwide, state, or individual organizations per report.

National x California x Cal

California Hispanic Chambers of Commerce
770 L Street, Suite 900 Sacramento, CA 95814

California Resources and Training (CARAT)
436 14th Street, Suite 425 Oakland, CA 94612

California Native Entrepreneur Opportunity Fund
738 North Market Blvd Sacramento, CA 95834

California Coastal Rural Development Corporation

▼ Organizational Focus

- ☐ All Programs
- ☐ Lending focused
- ☒ BDS focused

▼ Area Served

- ☒ All Areas
- ☐ Rural
- ☐ Urban
- ☐ Statewide
- ☐ Multistate

▼ Organizational Type

- ☒ All Types
- ☐ CDC
- ☐ CDFI
- ☐ Credit Union
- ☐ Stand-Alone
- ☐ CAA
- ☐ Network
- ☐ Other

▼ Staff Size

- ☒ All Sizes
- ☐ Fewer than 2 FTEs
- ☐ 2-5 FTEs
- ☐ Greater than 5 FTEs

▼ Program Age

- ☐ Any Age
- ☐ 0-5 Years Old
- ☐ 6-10 Years Old
- ☒ 11+ Years Old

Program Performance Indicators

- ▶ Program Scale
- ▶ Demographics
- ▶ Race and Ethnicity
- ▶ Costs and Efficiencies
- ▶ Low Income Status
- ▶ Microfinance Metrics

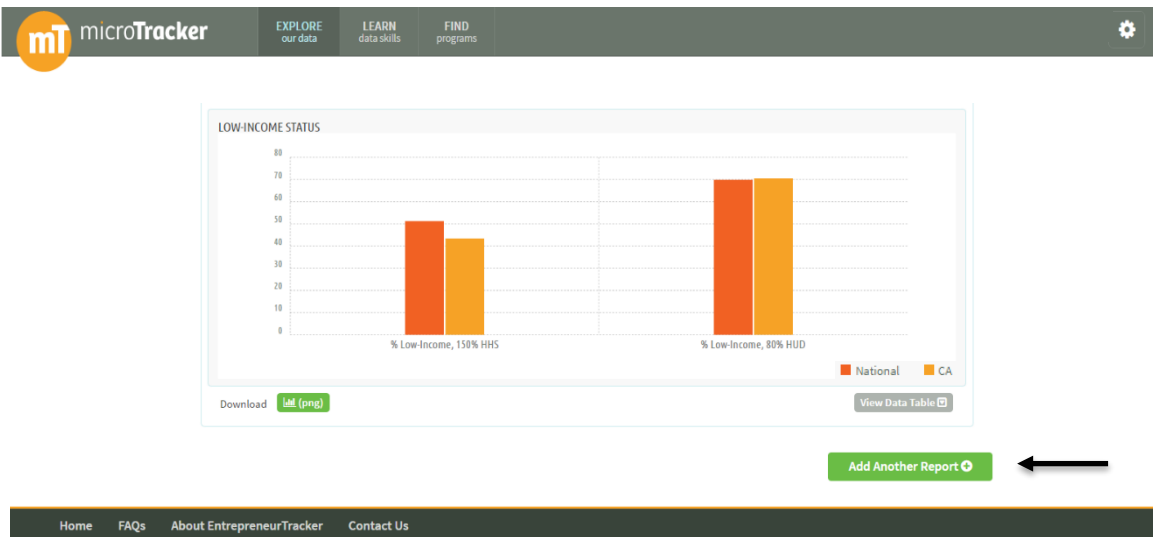
Apply Filters

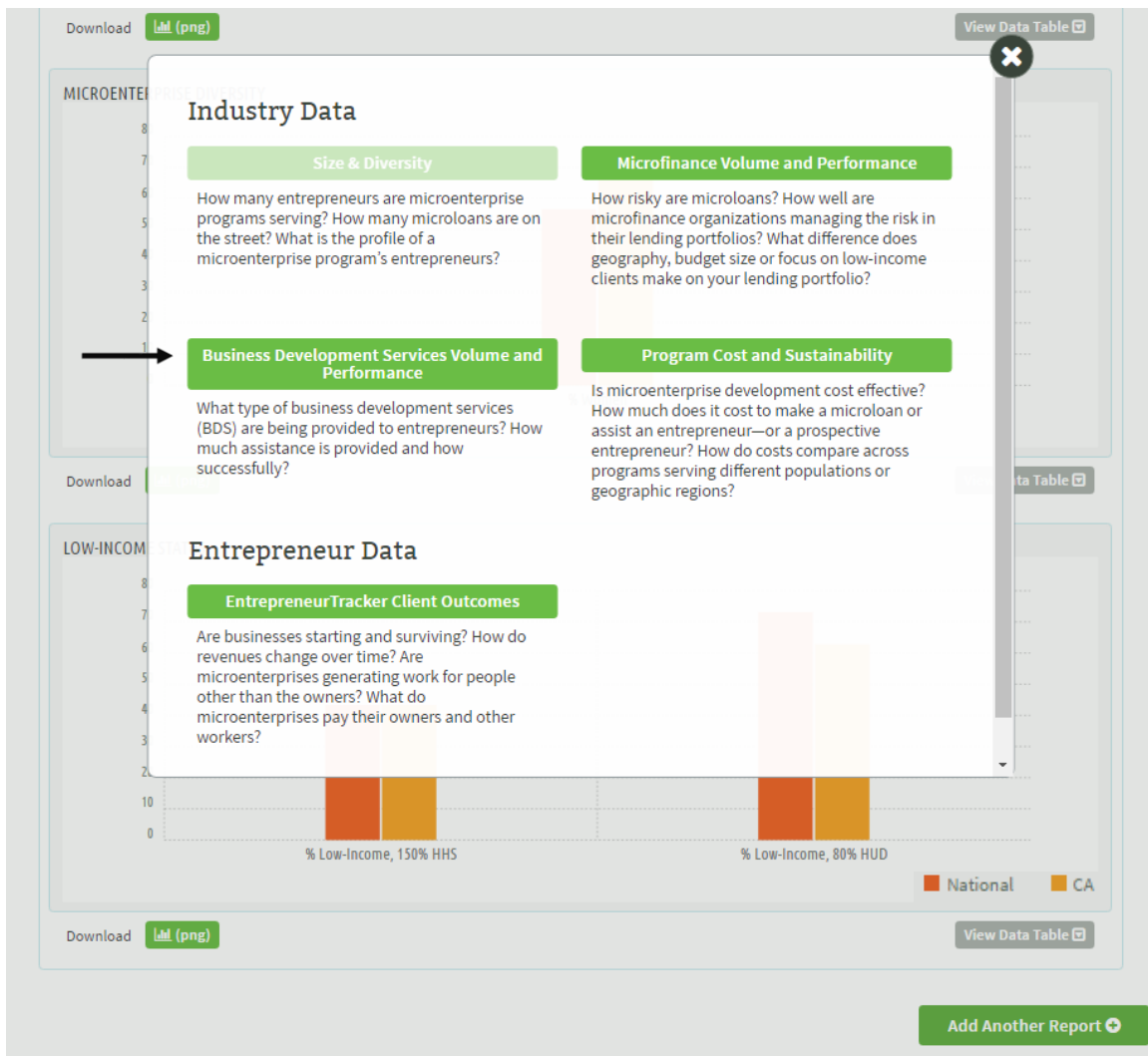
Cancel

After going through these steps the following median data can be filled into the data table.

Measure	Your organization - 2014	Rural Programs (national median)	Mature Programs (11+ Years Old) (national median)
# of Clients Served		72, n=36	146, n=47
# of Individuals Served		172, n=41	390, n=51
% Women served		56.49%, n=32	55.18%, n=40
Low Income - 150% of HHS		43.34%, n=3	51.2%, n=8
Low Income - 80% HUD		73.05%, n=20	69.82%, n=32

Now that you have completed filling out the data table with the indicators related to the size and diversity of MDOs, you can identify the additional data you are interested in related to BDS volume and performance, and program cost and sustainability. To mine for this additional data you can select the “Add Another Report” option at the bottom of the graphs you have already created. In doing so, a pop-up will show you the other categories of industry data. Choose the “Business Development Services Volume and Performance” category.





After choosing the additional industry data category, the graphs for national “Business Development Services Volume and Performance” will automatically be added under the “Size & Diversity” graphs you have already created. Select the “Customize Report” option and choose indicators of interest for the “Business Development Services Volume and Performance” category. In your case, you are interested in comparing your 2014 “Training Completion Rate” and “Formal Business Plan Completion Rate” with that of other BDS-focused rural programs that have reported data to microTracker. To do so, you can change the program characteristics categories to view these additional charts and data tables.

Indicators

Select the specific indicators you would like included on your report.

 [View metrics definitions](#)

Select All Indicators

BDS Services

- ☐ Training
- ☐ TA
- ☐ Mentoring/Coaching
- ☐ Financial Literacy
- ☐ Credit Counseling
- ☐ Access to Markets

Additional BDS Services

- ☐ Technology Services
- ☐ Business Incubation
- ☐ Tax Prep
- ☐ Case Mgmt Services

BDS Volume

- ☐ # of BDS individuals

Average BDS Hours

- ☐ 0 - 9 Hours
- ☐ 10 - 20 Hours
- ☐ 21 - 30 Hours
- ☐ 31 - 40 Hours
- ☐ 41+ Hours

BDS Performance

- ☒ Training Completion Rate
- ☐ Informal Business Plan Completion Rate
- ☒ Formal Business Plan Completion Rate

Average TA Hours

- ☐ 1 - 4 Hours
- ☐ 5 - 9 Hours
- ☐ 10 - 14 Hours
- ☐ 15 - 19 Hours
- ☐ 20 - 30 Hours
- ☐ 30+ Hours

Data Comparisons

Use this feature to type in specific microenterprise development organizations for which you would like to view data. You can compare up to six data points of nationwide, state, or individual organizations per report.

National x California (CA) x Ca

California Hispanic Chambers of Commerce
770 L Street, Suite 900 Sacramento, CA 95814

California Resources and Training (CARAT)
436 14th Street, Suite 425 Oakland, CA 94612

Caruthers St. Charities, Inc. dba Project HOPE
2740 Chrysler Address 2 Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

California Native Entrepreneur Opportunity Fund

▼ Organizational Focus

- ☐ All Programs
- ☐ Lending focused
- ☒ BDS focused

▼ Area Served

- ☐ All Areas
- ☒ Rural
- ☐ Urban
- ☐ Statewide
- ☐ Multistate

► Organizational Type

► Staff Size

► Program Age

You can view the graphs and accompanying data tables for the training and formal business plan completion rate indicators. Remember that typing in your organization or selected peer organizations in the “Data Comparisons” section of the report will add additional bars to the charts below, allowing you to compare across national geographical regions and specific MDO programs at a single glance. Using these data, you can fill out your data table for BDS-focused rural programs. Then update the program characteristics in the “Customize Report” option and add information to your data table for BDS-focused programs in all areas that have been operating for more than 11 years.

Measure	Your organization - 2014	Rural Programs (national median)	Mature Programs (11+ Years Old) (national median)
# of Clients Served		72, n=36	146, n=47
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Low Income - 80% HUD		43.34%, n=3	51.2%, n=8
Low Income – 150% HHS		73.05%, n=20	69.82%, n=32
Training Completion Rate		88.14%, n=9	86.21%, n=16
Formal Business Plan Completion Rate		66.67%, n=9	66.67%, n=11
Cost per Client			
Cost per Individual			

Remember that you can view the filters to your national and state-specific or individual program data below the “Business Development Services Volume and Performance” title. After completing the data table with business development services volume and performance indicators, select the “Add Another Report” feature at the bottom of the graphs you have already created. In doing so, a pop-up will again show you the other categories of industry data. Choose the “Program Cost and Sustainability” category.

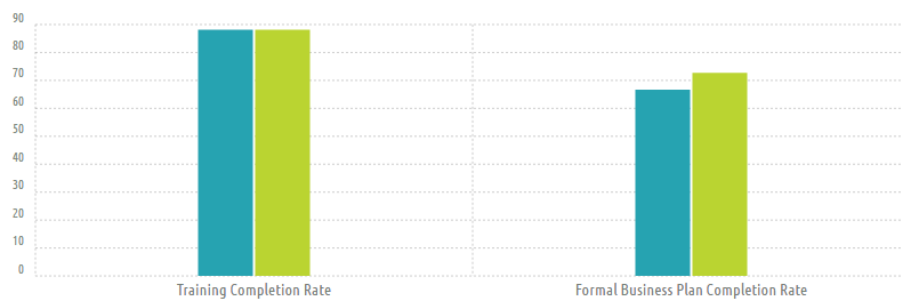
Business Development Services Volume and Performance

Fiscal Year: 2014 Organizational Focus: BDS focused Area Served: Rural

Download Report [\(pdf\)](#)

[Customize Report](#)

BDS PERFORMANCE



Download [\(png\)](#)

[View Data Table](#)

Training Completion Rate

	median	average	min	max	sum	n
National	88.14%	85.96%	67.06%	100%	773.67%	9
CA	88.14%	87.16%	75.61%	100%	435.81%	5

Formal Business Plan Completion Rate

	median	average	min	max	sum	n
National	66.67%	65.13%	0%	100%	586.21%	9
CA	72.73%	71.18%	60.71%	80.1%	213.54%	3

[Add Another Report](#)

Expand the “Customize Report” option and choose the indicators of interest. In the case of the data table you have created above, choose the “\$ Cost per Individual Served” and “\$ Cost per Clients Served” indicators.

Indicators

Select the specific indicators you would like included on your report.

[View metrics definitions](#)

Select All Indicators

Microenterprise Program Costs

- ☒ \$ Cost Per Individual Served
- ☐ \$ Cost per Businesses Served
- ☒ \$ Cost per Clients Served
- ☐ \$ Cost Per Microloan Disbursed

Microenterprise Program Budget Sources

- ☐ Earned
- ☐ Federal
- ☐ State
- ☐ Private
- ☐ Local
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Individual

Microenterprise Program Budget

- ☐ \$ Total Operating Income
- ☐ \$ Total Expenses

Microenterprise Program Budget Sources

- ☐ Short-term Financial Self-Sufficiency

Staff Efficiency Measures

- ☐ Individuals per Direct Service Provider
- ☐ Clients per Direct Service Provider

Microenterprise Program Budget Sources

- ☐ Operational Cost Rate

Data Comparisons

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National

California (CA)

Cal

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California Coastal Rural Development Corporation

221 Main St. 3rd Floor Salinas, CA 93901

California Capital Financial Development Corporation

2000 O Street Suite 250 Sacramento, CA 95811

California Economic Development Lending Initiative (CEDLI)

1333 Broadway, Suite 604 Oakland, CA 94612

Organizational Focus

- ☐ All Programs
- ☐ Lending focused
- ☒ BDS focused

Area Served

- ☐ All Areas
- ☒ Rural
- ☐ Urban
- ☐ Statewide
- ☐ Multistate

Organizational Type

Program Age

Staff Size

You can view the graphs and accompanying data tables for the cost per client and cost per individual indicators. Remember that typing in your organization or selected peer organizations in the “Data Comparisons” section of the report will add additional bars to the charts below, allowing you to compare across national geographical regions and specific MDO programs at a single glance. You can now fill out your data table for BDS-focused rural programs. Then update the program characteristics in the “Customize Report” option and add information to your data table for BDS-focused programs in all areas that have been operating for more than 11 years.

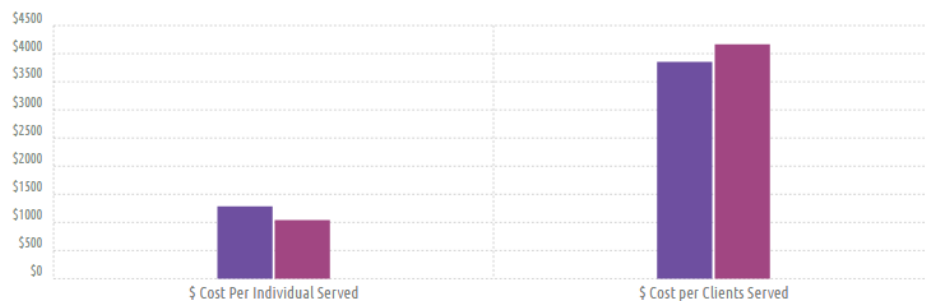
Program Cost and Sustainability

Fiscal Year: 2014 Organizational Focus: BDS focused Area Served: Rural ←

Download Report [\(pdf\)](#)

[Customize Report](#)

MICROENTERPRISE PROGRAM COSTS



Download [\(png\)](#)

[View Data Table](#)

\$ Cost Per Individual Served

	median	average	min	max	sum	n
National	\$1,283.14	\$1,539.42	\$219.69	\$4,513.36	\$24,630.80	16
CA	\$1,041.02	\$1,192.69	\$219.69	\$2,889.98	\$8,348.84	7

\$ Cost per Clients Served

	median	average	min	max	sum	n
National	\$3,853.45	\$3,826.62	\$1,163.08	\$8,282.22	\$57,399.34	15
CA	\$4,166.67	\$4,196.59	\$1,163.08	\$6,925.94	\$29,376.15	7

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Measure	Your organization - 2014	Rural Programs (national median)	Mature Programs (11+ Years Old) (national median)
# of Clients Served		72, n=36	146, n=47
# of Individuals Served		172, n=41	390, n=51
% Women Served		56.49%, n=32	55.18%, n=40
Low Income - 80% HUD		43.34%, n=3	51.2%, n=8
Low Income – 150% HHS		73.05%, n=20	69.82%, n=32
Training Completion Rate		88.14%, n=9	86.21%, n=16
Formal Business Plan Completion Rate		66.67%, n=9	66.67%, n=11
Cost per Client		\$3,853.45, n=15	\$3,183.69, n=11
Cost per Individual		\$1,283.14, n=16	\$1,044.29, n=22

Step 5: Understand the results and use the data

After going through the various categories of data available on microTracker, your data table should be complete. Now you have side-by-side comparisons with different peer groups to see where your organization is excelling, where it is on par, or where there may be opportunities for improvement.

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