CAMEO is California’s microbusiness support network, dedicated to growing a healthy, vibrant, thriving environment for all entrepreneurs and start-up businesses by advancing the work of our members. Together we help entrepreneurs harness their innovative ideas and creativity so that they fulfill their dreams, create local jobs, and grow our state’s economy.

Our network is made up of over 170 organizations, agencies, and individuals dedicated to furthering microbusiness development in California. We raise resources, advocate for supportive public policies, and build the capacity of our members so that they can expand entrepreneurial training, business assistance, and lending services to more California businesses.

Every year we survey our members to determine their economic impacts and the landscape of microbusiness development. By doing so, organizations are able to demonstrate the significant role the Micro sector plays in local and statewide economies.

Following are highlights from survey outcomes for 2014.

- 19,866 clients and 17,411 business served
- 65% of clients served were low-to-moderate income
- 29,407 jobs supported; these include full- and part-time jobs created over a 36-month period, plus all businesses served
- $1.3 billion estimated gross sales generated by businesses served
- 3,134 loans under $50,000 for a total of $39.1 million; average loan size was $12,478
- Members provided 248,868 hours of group training and 77,563 hours of one-on-one consulting
- 38% of CAMEO members provide training, coaching, and lending services; 62% provide only training and coaching services
- 35% of CAMEO members serve only urban areas; 20% serve only rural areas; 45% serve both
- Median revenue per member organization was $425,635, an increase of 8% over last year
2015 Highlights of Annual Survey

- Lending increased by 52% from 2013 to 2014; and is up by 250% over 2010. Our members made 3,134 loans, for a total volume of $39.1 million. Microlending increased across the network from the previous year: 50% of lenders made the same or greater number of microloans; the median lender made 17% more loans.

- Jobs supported (business owners plus their employees) increased by 23%, recovering to 2012 levels. Our members’ revenue increased in 2014 after five years of decline, with the median organization’s revenue growing by 8% over 2013. Although jobs supported and median revenue remain lower than they were in 2009, we are encouraged by this growth in client services.

- Federal funding declined as a share of member revenue, accounting for only 25% of revenue in 2014, down from 40% in 2013. Private sources make up the shortfall, rising from 25% in 2013 to 40% in 2014. Earned income from events, loans, and program fees was the second largest source of revenue at 32%.

- The SBDC network served 65,000 businesses in 2014, and supported 8,625 jobs, up by 9% from last year. SBDC clients started 920 new businesses and secured $535.5 million in capital with SBDC assistance. Their clients generated $343.7 million in new revenue, a substantial growth over the previous year.

Abraham Lopez arrived in San Rafael in 1997 from Mexico. His first job was washing dishes, but he worked his way up to supervisor at Rickey’s Restaurant in Novato. He opened a small catering company in 2007, but the recession hit and he had to close. He has a passion for gadgets and technology, so he promised his son, Johny: “Someday, we’re going to open an electronics repair business.”

He started saving money, and enrolled in a business class at Renaissance Marin in 2011. He worked three jobs to keep his promise and launch YucaTech Technology Solutions: nights at restaurant, mornings in hotel maintenance, and afternoons at YucaTech. Today, he has two employees and his own storefront, with plans for another. His son Johny enrolled in Pomona College in the fall of 2015 to study business and environmental science.

Toni Ricci grew up poor in a small town in Maine. She started dancing when she was five years old, and knew that she wanted to own her own dance studio. She studied dance in college, and toured the country with a troupe before falling in love with Los Angeles. She moved to California with just $500, and started teaching at a dance studio in Tarzana. Within 2 years she went from teaching 4 classes a week to 30, becoming very attached to her kids. When the owner decided to sell the business in 2012, she thought, “This is the time to open my own studio.”

Elite Dance and Performing Arts Center opened in September 2012 with 60 students. After some cash flow problems and being unable to get a bank loan, she found VEDC. “They’ve saved us from going under over the past three years.” Today, the school has 270 students and is thriving.

Abraham Lopez

Toni Ricci