Since 1991, AEO has endeavored to create economic opportunities for underserved entrepreneurs. This list highlights AEO’s advocacy accomplishments.

1991 – Association for Enterprise Opportunity is founded by a national group of micro enterprise development organizations

1991 – Drafted and worked to pass the original, five-year pilot Microloan program as part of the FY1992 Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations Bill

1992 – Microloan program becomes operational and begins providing capital

1993 – Worked with then Congressmen Ron Wyden (D-OR) and then Senator Harris Wofford (D-PA) to pass the Unemployment Insurance/Self-Employment Assistance (SEA) Program

1994 – Supported the Riegle Community Development and Regulatory Improvement Act of 1994, which established the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) Fund


1998 – Developed Program For Investment in Microentrepreneurs (PRIME) with support from Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and Sen. Pete Domenici (R-NM)

1998 – Successfully advocated for the permanent reauthorization of the SEA Program

1999 – Championed the establishment of the PRIME Program in the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act

2001 – PRIME Grants are made available for the first time

2003 – Published Introduction to Starting and Sustaining a Microenterprise Development Program, the first set of standards for the microenterprise development industry

2006 – Organized Congressional testimony from entrepreneurs to demonstrate the Microloan Program’s positive impact on small business growth

2007 – Testified before the House Small Business Committee to oppose the removal of technical assistance grants from the Microloan Program

2008 – Culmination of a multi-year advocacy effort to prevent the elimination of the PRIME Program and Microloan Program from the Administration’s Budget
2008 – Advocated for the Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program (RMAP), which was established by the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008

2010 – Supported the Small Business Jobs Act of 2010, which raised the cap on SBA Microloans to $50,000 and established the CDFI Bond Guarantee Program

2010 – RMAP funds are made available for the first time to support entrepreneurship in rural communities

2011 – Released The Power of One in Three, a groundbreaking report on microbusinesses

2012 – Launched “One in Three” Campaign to unleash the job creation potential of one million microbusinesses in the U.S.

2013 – Formed the Micro Capital Task Force a private multi-stakeholder task force to present fact-based and practical recommendations to the White House, the Department of Treasury and the Congress regarding access to capital in amounts of up to $250,000 for the smallest businesses.

2013 – Published Bigger Than You Think: The Economic Impact of Microbusiness in the United States, documenting AEO's two-year study to show the impact of microbusinesses and their contributions to the American economy

2014 – Encouraged initial legislation by Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) to modernize and expand the Women's Business Center program

2014 – Promoted entrepreneurship in job training programs as a component of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

2015 – Advocated for implementation of Section 1071 of the Dodd-Frank Act to improve data collection on lending

2015 – Led coalition to increase lending authority for SBA’s 7(a) program

2016 – Supported Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Small Business Committee Chair Steve Chabot’s (R-OH) reauthorization of the Women’s Business Center Program

2016 – Advocated for doubling funding to the PRIME Grant Program for the 2017 fiscal year

2016 – Organized Members of Congress to urge the Department of Labor to include entrepreneurship metrics in final rules implementing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

2016 – Developed the Microloan Modernization Act of 2016 with Senator Deb Fischer (R-NE)
2017 – Worked with the House and Senate Appropriations Committees and ensured that funding came in at, or near, AEO’s FY 2018 funding requests

2017 – Hosted two Small Business Roundtables featuring guest speaker William Manger, associate administrator for the Office of Capital Access at the U.S Small Business Administration

2017 – Influenced tax reform legislation to include parity to pass-through small businesses