



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Revolutionizing SBA & USDA Lending: Industry Titans Unite to Launch Phoenix Lender Services

#### A game-changing collaboration is set to redefine small business lending with a bold new approach

**LaGrange, GA – January 14, 2025** – A groundbreaking new player in the lending industry has arrived: [Phoenix Lender Services \(PHX\)](#), a subsidiary of Community Bankshares, Inc. (CBI), the holding company of Community Bank & Trust (CB&T) and a transformative force in the Small Business Administration (SBA) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) lending space. With a combined experience of over 700+ years and \$31 billion financed in their careers, Phoenix is not just a lender service provider – it’s a bold reimagination of what’s possible for small businesses across America.

**PHX** offers a comprehensive suite of lender services, combining centuries worth of expertise with cutting-edge solutions to simplify and optimize the lending lifecycle.

Helmed by **Chris Hurn**, President and CEO of Phoenix Lender Services and President of CBI, PHX brings together a powerhouse team of industry leaders, including **Jeremy Gilpin**, Chairman of the Board for CBI, along with seasoned executives specializing in SBA and USDA lending. Together, they share a mission to drive innovation and provide unparalleled support to lenders and borrowers across the nation.

“Small businesses are the backbone of the economy, yet accessing the capital they need remains a challenge,” said Hurn. “At Phoenix, we’re not just offering loans—we’re delivering the full spectrum of lending support services, ensuring that small businesses and lenders alike can thrive. With over 700+ years of combined experience, our 37-person team is uniquely positioned to tackle the complexities of SBA and USDA lending.”

### End-to-End Lending and Servicing Solutions

Phoenix Lender Services provides:

- **SBA Underwriting, Closing, Servicing, and Liquidations:** Managing the full lifecycle of SBA loans, from origination to liquidation, while ensuring compliance and borrower support.
- **USDA Underwriting, Closing, Servicing, and Liquidations:** Specializing in rural and underserved communities, PHX facilitates USDA business loans that provide critical financing for agricultural and rural development projects.
- **Secondary Market Sales:** Enhancing liquidity for lending institutions through the sale of loans on the secondary market.
- **Exclusive Origination Services for CB&T:** Streamlined origination services ensure a seamless application experience for CB&T clients.

“By handling the intricacies of SBA and USDA lending, Phoenix allows lenders to focus on what they do best—serving their customers,” said Gilpin. “Our goal is to make the process faster, easier, and more accessible while delivering unmatched expertise and support.”

### **Building on Success: Partnership with Community Bankshares, Inc.**

As a wholly owned subsidiary of CBI and sister company of CB&T, Phoenix leverages the resources and expertise of a trusted financial institution. CB&T’s remarkable rise to the #25 most active SBA lender in the U.S. (by originations) during Q1 of the current fiscal year is a testament to the strength of this partnership. Phoenix plays a pivotal role in ensuring the efficiency, compliance, and growth of CB&T’s SBA and USDA loan operations.

### **A Leadership Team Like No Other**

Phoenix is led by a distinguished group of professionals:

- **Chris Hurn**, President & CEO: Has extensive background in small business lending and is a national advocate for small businesses, regularly delivering congressional testimony, appearing in national media, and publishing articles that promote education and innovation in the industry. He has excelled in the small business finance space since 1998. Hurn is also the President of CBI.
- **Jeremy Gilpin**, Chairman of the Board, CBI: One of the most well-known leaders in the USDA business lending industry, publishing articles, interviews, and giving keynote speeches nationwide. He began his banking/lending career in 1994.
- **Lance Sexton**, EVP, Chief SBA Servicing & Liquidation Officer: Has a 30-year history in the origination, servicing, and liquidation of SBA loans. He most recently served as the Deputy Director of the SBA Little Rock Commercial Loan Servicing Center prior to working with Hurn at Fountainhead SBF, an SBLC.
- **Stephanie Dunn**, EVP, Chief SBA Revenue Officer: Serves as a Council Member for the State of North Carolina’s Innovation Council and has 25 years of experience in the financial services industry. Most recently, she served as the President of SBA Lending at Grasshopper Bank. She has also served as President of SBA Lending at IncredibleBank and First Bank.

- **Michael Bland**, EVP, Chief SBA Credit Officer: an operational leader with extensive experience in SBA credit and underwriting services, formerly having worked with Hurn and Sexton at Fountainhead.
- **Doreen Amador**, EVP, USDA Production: Involved in commercial lending for over 27 years, particularly in USDA business lending.
- **Shane Pierson**, SVP, National SBA Sales Manager: Record-breaking sales executive driving business growth and having worked with Dunn at several lending institutions.
- **Matt Craig**, SVP, Growth & Marketing: Marketing strategist renowned for building impactful brands and growing revenue, and having previously worked with Hurn, Sexton, and Bland at Fountainhead.

### **Empowering Small Businesses Nationwide**

“Phoenix represents a bold new chapter in small business lending,” said Hurn. “We’re committed to empowering small businesses, creating opportunities for underserved communities, and transforming the way lenders operate.”

### **About Phoenix Lender Services**

Founded in 2025, Phoenix Lender Services is a nationwide lender service provider specializing in SBA and USDA loans. As a subsidiary of Community Bankshares, Inc., Phoenix combines unparalleled expertise with innovative solutions to simplify loan underwriting, closing, and servicing, all while empowering lenders to help more small businesses. With a team that has facilitated over \$31 billion in financing and a Preferred Lender Program (PLP) designation from the SBA (through CB&T), Phoenix is redefining what’s possible in small business lending.

“We appreciate that the industry needs revitalized and that’s what we’re doing with Phoenix,” Hurn said. “We intend to provide a better alternative for lenders wanting to participate in making SBA and USDA loans. Launching a government-guaranteed commercial lending department is timely, expensive, and requires significant specialized experience. But, by outsourcing key activities to us (PHX), we can provide a better experience for our lenders and help grow the industry at the same time.”

**To learn more, visit [www.PhoenixLenderServices.com](http://www.PhoenixLenderServices.com)**

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