

# WASHINGTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

## NATALIE GUNN

CFO, Capital Impact Partners

Natalie Gunn never planned to work for a nonprofit.

In the private sector, “the work was the work. It paid the bills,” she says. “I really didn’t know that I could experience the fulfillment of working somewhere where I could continue to pay the bills and build relationships and make a significant, tangible impact that I could actually track.”

But that’s indeed what she discovered when she joined Capital Impact Partners, an Arlington community development financial institution, in April 2012, following her turn as assistant controller for its former sister company, National Cooperative Bank. And this year, the coronavirus pandemic has only magnified that sentiment.

When Covid-19 hit, Gunn and her colleagues had to ensure that their staff, borrowers and investors had what they needed to make it through. But, she says, they had to balance that with the financials.

“We try to be as proactive as we can, but in our industry, it’s a constant reaction,” Gunn says.

The company cut back on certain expenses, started holding daily meetings and jumped in with an “all hands on deck” attitude, Gunn says, “whether it’s in their scope or out of their scope, and that’s what we did when Covid hit.”

As Capital Impact’s chief financial officer since May 2016, Gunn handles the financial strategic roadmap to ensure that the organization “always has a capital plan to support the business,” she says. The nonprofit has disbursed more than \$2.5 billion to support its communities since 1982, but she says it’s not just about raising funding. It’s also about raising the



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right type of capital, whether its investors are small philanthropists or big banks like Wells Fargo and Chase, “so that we can then have a strong capital base to be able to provide the type of investment to the communities we serve that they actually need.”

Those communities may include low- and moderate-income individuals who often haven’t previously had access to credit, Gunn says, “and the big banks just won’t deal with them; they don’t understand their needs.”

Within the nearly 100-person company, Gunn oversees a 15-person team across accounting, treasury, finance, IT, human resources and corporate services. Capital

**Age:** 48

**Residence:** Alexandria

**Education:** Bachelor’s in accounting, Hampton University

**Family:** Husband Rodney; children Zachary, 17, and Bryce, 14

**Hometown:** Moved around a lot as a kid, but in Greater Washington for 25 years

**First job:** Babysitting when living in Germany at age 11 and working at Mrs. Fields in Springfield Mall at age 14

**Most likely to be found on the weekend:** At the lacrosse field or tennis court watching my kids play sports, or getting together with a nearby family for games night

**My role models:** My parents, first and foremost. My dad was in Vietnam and all kinds of wars. My mom held it down at home when he wasn’t there. They put us all through college, no debt on our part whatsoever. They’ve just been phenomenal. I look to that as far as relationships are concerned and how I raise my kids.

**Best business advice:** I’m not going to necessarily know how to do everything that I’m asked to do. But the key in that is having a solid network that you can lean on and leverage for information that you might need to do the best that you can, in whatever you’re asked of.

Impact generated \$37 million in revenue in 2019. And heading into 2021, Gunn and her colleagues are already looking at other products they can offer their borrowers within their four main sectors: healthy food, health care, education and housing. That will mean expanding its footprint by partnering with other organizations with complementary expertise.

“I think ’21 is going to be a tipping point where we’re going to have to make some changes in how we serve the community,” she says. “There’s just so much going on, with the equity, with the social injustice, with the economy, that we’re going to have to shift gears a little bit more.”

– Sara Gilgore