

LOANSTARS

ARF'S REFERRAL PARTNER REWARDS PROGRAM



A REFERRAL PARTNER FIELD GUIDE

THE DEAL BEHIND THE DEAL

*A Referral Partner's Field Guide to Finding the Next Financing
Conversation in an Existing Client Book*

Prepared for ARF Financial Referral Partners
Q4 Book-Review Edition

"Somewhere in your client list is a deal you have not found yet."

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Executive Summary

Every Referral Partner's next opportunity is not always a new lead. It is often a client already funded once before — a business whose circumstances have changed since the day the paperwork closed. This white paper is a practical field guide for identifying the next appropriate financing conversation within an existing client book.

Referral Partners spend enormous energy prospecting for new business, and rightly so. But new-lead generation is not the only path to a stronger pipeline heading into Q4. Somewhere in nearly every client list is a business that has grown, slowed, restocked, expanded, aged a piece of equipment, or taken on a new obligation since its last conversation with a Referral Partner. Recognizing that change early — and asking about it in a useful, non-transactional way — is the discipline this guide teaches.

This is not a call to solicit every past client for another loan. A prior transaction does not make a business automatically eligible, qualified, or in need of additional financing. What it does provide is a starting point: familiarity with the business, an established relationship, and a factual record of what the client needed before. Used well, that starting point allows a Referral Partner to ask better questions sooner — before a financing need becomes urgent and options narrow.

The chapters that follow walk through the business, cash-flow, operational, seasonal, and debt-related signals worth monitoring; a library of discovery questions organized by topic; a scoring system for prioritizing outreach; three realistic client scenarios; one detailed field example; and a 30-day plan for reviewing an existing book before Q4. The goal is a repeatable system — not a one-time list-mining exercise — that keeps Referral Partners useful to clients long after a transaction funds.

Somewhere in your client list is a deal you have not found yet. This guide is about finding it responsibly.

Introduction

Every funded transaction ends the same way on paper: documents signed, funds disbursed, file closed. But for the business on the other side of that transaction, the story does not end there. The client keeps operating, keeps making decisions, and keeps encountering the same kinds of pressures and opportunities that led to the first financing conversation — new orders, aging equipment, seasonal inventory, slower-paying customers, a new location, a renovation, or a debt structure that no longer fits the business.

Most Referral Partners are well practiced at recognizing these signals in a brand-new prospect. Far fewer have a system for recognizing them in a client they already know. That gap is not a lack of skill — it is usually a lack of structure. Attention naturally shifts to the next new lead once a deal funds, follow-up schedules are informal at best, and there is rarely an easy way to know which of the fifty, one hundred, or three hundred clients in a book deserve a phone call this month.

This guide addresses that gap directly. It treats the existing client book for what it is: a body of relationships built on real transactions, real conversations, and real trust — and, within it, a set of businesses that are likely, at any given time, to be approaching their next financing decision. The task is not to guess which ones. The task is to build a process that surfaces the right ones, at the right time, for the right reasons.

Two ideas run through every section of this guide. First, an existing relationship is an advantage in gathering information — not a guarantee of a future deal. Second, the best follow-up conversations are built on a business question, not a financing pitch. A Referral Partner who asks “What has changed since we last talked?” learns something. A Referral Partner who asks “Do you need more money?” usually does not.

ARF Financial has worked with small businesses since 2001 and partners with Referral Partners nationwide to evaluate bank loans and revolving lines of credit for qualified small businesses. What follows is a field guide, not a script — a way of looking at an existing book so the next appropriate conversation becomes visible before it becomes urgent.

1. THE OPPORTUNITY ALREADY IN THE BOOK

New leads require a Referral Partner to do several things at once: identify a business, establish credibility, learn its history, and evaluate a financing need — often within a single conversation. An existing client relationship starts several steps ahead.

The Referral Partner already understands, at least in outline, how the business operates. The client already knows the Referral Partner and has been through a transaction with them, which means a level of trust already exists that a new prospect has not yet extended. The prior financing itself is a source of context: what it funded, how much was needed, and how the transaction was structured all say something about how the business plans and pays. Because the relationship already exists, a Referral Partner is often positioned to notice a change in the business sooner than a competitor would. And because the history is already established, outreach can start with the business itself — a question about growth, cash flow, or operations — rather than opening with a product.

TWO STARTING POINTS

NEW LEAD	EXISTING RELATIONSHIP
☐ Establish credibility	✓ Trust already established
☐ Learn the business	✓ Business context known
☐ Identify the history	✓ Prior transaction available
☐ Confirm the need	✓ Start with what changed

Figure 1. An existing relationship starts with context and trust that a new lead does not yet have.

None of this means an existing client is easier to close, automatically qualified, or entitled to more financing than a new applicant. A business's financial condition changes. Obligations change. Eligibility changes. The role of familiarity is to improve the quality of the questions a Referral Partner can ask — not to shortcut the process of confirming whether financing is appropriate now.

THE DEAL BEHIND THE DEAL

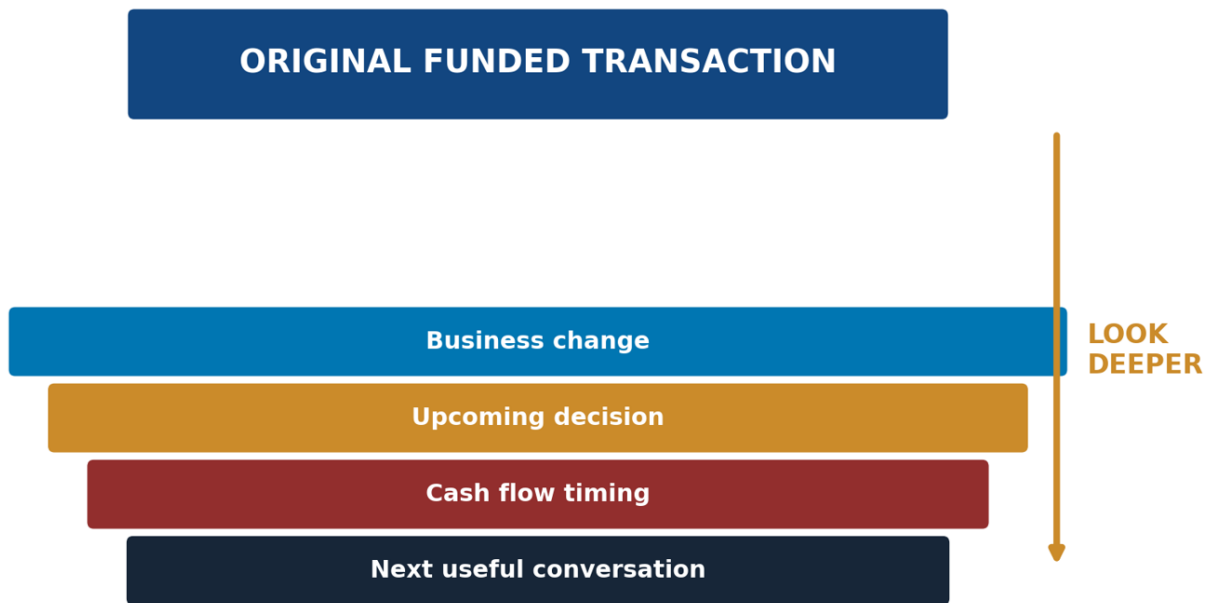
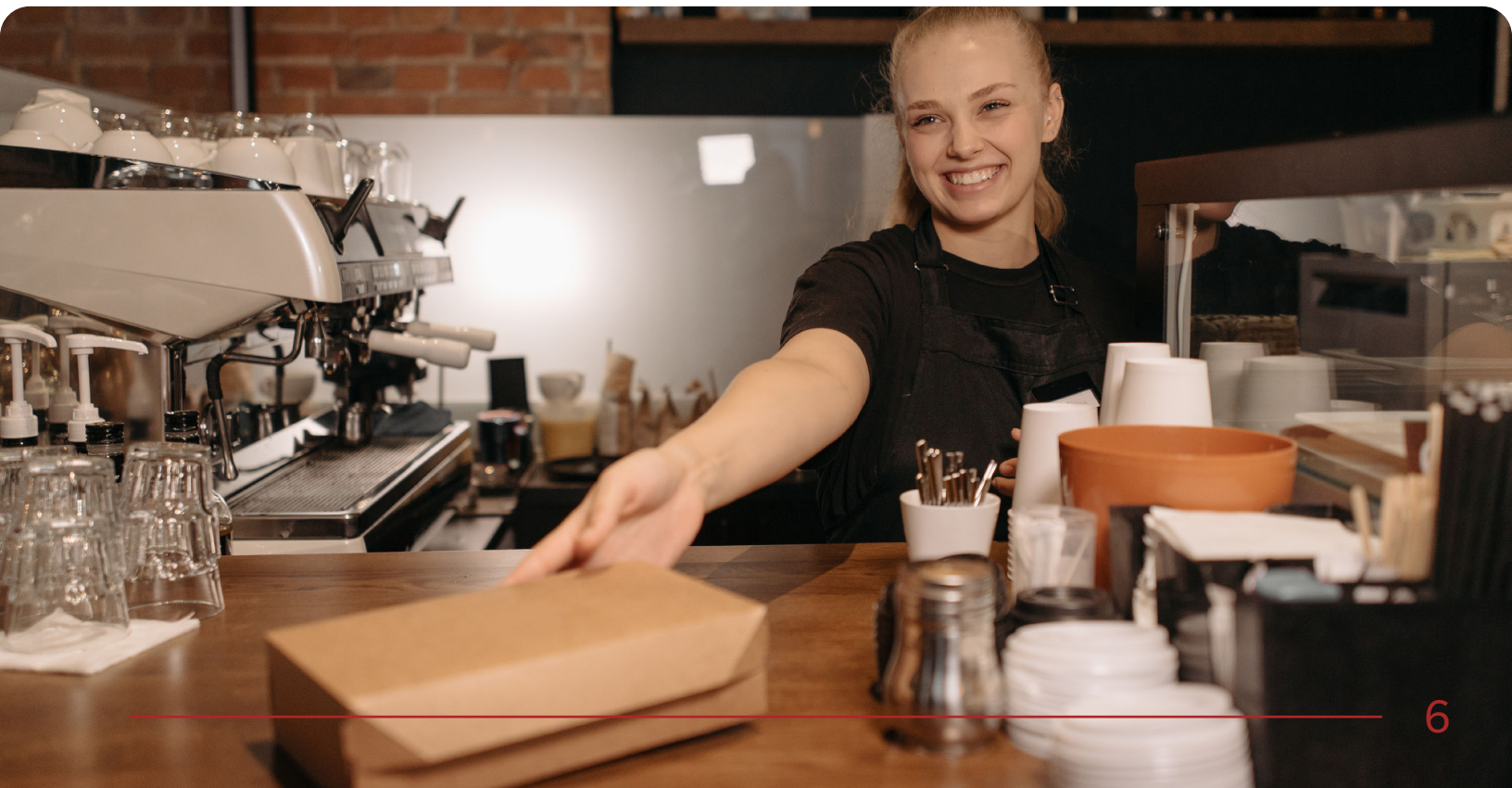


Figure 2. Every funded transaction can contain clues to the next useful business conversation.

The Existing Client Advantage

“Familiarity does not guarantee another deal. It gives the Referral Partner a better starting point for asking informed questions.”



2. WHY GOOD RELATIONSHIPS GO QUIET

If existing clients offer such a clear starting point, why do so many Referral Partners lose touch with them after funding? The reasons are rarely personal and almost always structural.

Once a deal funds, attention naturally returns to sourcing new business — which is, after all, how most Referral Partners are measured. Without a scheduled follow-up process, funded clients quietly drop out of the weekly routine. Many Referral Partners wait for the client to reach out first, which can mean waiting for a need to become urgent before a conversation happens at all. The transaction itself is often treated as a completed event rather than the opening of an ongoing relationship. When follow-up does happen, it is frequently limited to a single question — whether the client needs more money — which invites a quick no and closes the door on a more useful conversation.

Other causes are more practical. Contact and business information goes stale. There is no simple way to rank which of dozens or hundreds of clients deserve attention this month. Some Referral Partners avoid reaching out at all because they do not want to sound like they are selling. And in many cases, no one wrote down what the client said about their next likely business event, so that detail disappears along with the memory of the conversation.

The fix is not more frequent contact. It is more useful contact — grounded in the client's business, not in the Referral Partner's need for a next deal.

The Wrong Follow-Up Question

Instead of asking:

- “Do you need more money?”

Try asking:

- “What has changed in the business since we last spoke?”
- “What are you preparing for during the next two quarters?”
- “Is anything putting more pressure on working capital than it did last year?”
- “What is the next major expense or growth decision on your calendar?”

3. THE BUSINESS SIGNALS THAT CAN REVEAL THE NEXT CONVERSATION

A financing conversation rarely begins with a request. It begins with a change — something happening in the business that creates a timing gap between when cash is needed and when it becomes available. Recognizing these changes is the core skill this guide teaches.

The tables below organize signals into five categories: revenue and demand, cash flow, operations, seasonal and calendar patterns, and existing debt. For each signal, the tables note what may be happening, why it matters, a discovery question that opens the conversation, and — just as importantly — when the same signal may not point to a financing need at all. These are conversation starters, not proof that financing is necessary or appropriate. Confirming an actual need always requires a real conversation and a look at current financial information.

FIVE SIGNAL CATEGORIES

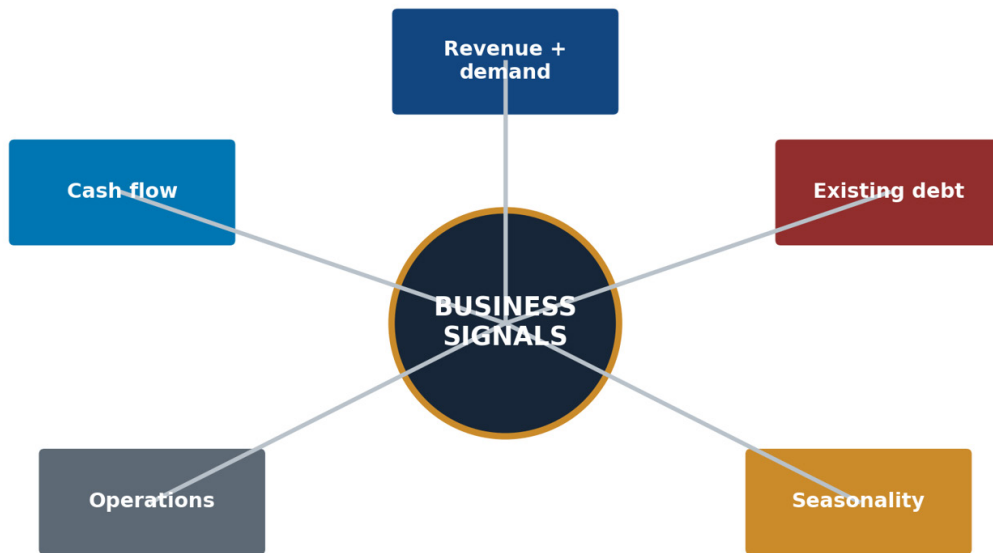


Figure 3. Five categories of business signals can point toward a timely follow-up.

Revenue and Demand Signals

SIGNAL	WHAT MAY BE HAPPENING	WHY IT MATTERS	DISCOVERY QUESTION	MAY NOT INDICATE A NEED WHEN...
Sales growth	Order volume or revenue is rising faster than usual.	Growth can outpace the cash available to fund it.	What would it take to keep up with this pace?	Growth is modest and current resources absorb it easily.
A new customer or contract	A new account has been signed or a contract awarded.	Fulfilling it may require upfront costs before payment arrives.	What has to happen before the first invoice goes out?	The contract requires no added labor, inventory, or equipment.
Increased order volume	Existing customers are ordering more per cycle.	Higher volume can strain inventory, staffing, or production capacity.	Is the current setup keeping pace with these order sizes?	The increase is temporary or within normal seasonal range.
New geographic markets	The business is selling into a new region or territory	Entry often requires travel, marketing, staffing, or logistics costs.	What does it cost to properly enter that market?	Expansion is organic, low-cost, and self-funding.
A new product or service	A new offering is being developed or launched.	Development, inventory, or marketing costs may precede revenue.	What has to be in place before this can launch?	The offering requires minimal investment to bring to market.
A large project award	The business has won a significant one-time project.	Large projects often require materials or labor paid before completion.	How does the payment schedule line up with project costs?	Payment terms front-load costs or a deposit covers the gap.
Slower sales	Revenue has softened compared to prior periods.	Fixed costs continue even as revenue declines.	What is the plan for the next few months if this continues?	The slowdown is a normal, well-understood seasonal pattern.
Customer concentration	A large share of revenue comes from one or a few customers.	A payment delay or loss from one account creates outsized risk.	What would a delay from your largest customer do to cash flow?	The client already maintains a strong reserve against this risk.
Changes in average transaction size	Typical order or sale size has shifted meaningfully.	Larger transactions may require more working capital per cycle.	Has the cash needed to fulfill a typical order changed?	The shift is small or offset by faster payment terms.

Table 1. Revenue and demand signals worth monitoring in an existing client book.

Cash-Flow Signals

SIGNAL	WHAT MAY BE HAPPENING	WHY IT MATTERS	DISCOVERY QUESTION	MAY NOT INDICATE A NEED WHEN...
Customers paying more slowly	Days-to-pay has increased.	Slower collections widen the gap between cost and cash-in.	Has your average collection time shifted this year?	The change is a single late payment, not a pattern.
Aging accounts receivable	A growing share of receivables are past due.	Aging receivables tie up cash the business is counting on.	How much of your receivables are more than 60 days out?	One large invoice is temporarily skewing the aging report.
Declining cash balances	Operating cash on hand is trending down.	Persistent decline can signal a structural, not seasonal, gap.	Is this a normal dip or a new pattern?	The dip lines up with a known, recurring seasonal cycle.
Greater reliance on credit cards	More operating expenses are running through business credit cards.	Revolving card balances are often a costly way to bridge gaps.	What are the cards currently being used to cover?	Card use is for rewards or convenience, paid in full monthly.
Increasing accounts payable	Vendor balances are growing or aging.	Stretching payables can strain supplier relationships and terms.	Are any vendors tightening terms because of payment timing?	Payables reflect planned, short-term timing rather than strain.
Uneven deposit patterns	Cash deposits are inconsistent week to week.	Irregular inflows make payroll and vendor timing harder to plan.	How predictable is the timing of cash coming in?	The business has always operated with lumpy, seasonal deposits.
Payroll pressure	Meeting payroll is becoming tighter or requires juggling.	Payroll is typically the least flexible obligation a business has.	Is payroll timing creating pressure relative to cash-in?	A one-time event, like a new hire's first check, caused it.
Tax obligations	A quarterly or annual tax payment is approaching.	Large, fixed-date obligations can collide with slower cash periods.	How does the timing of this payment line up with cash flow?	The obligation is modest and already reserved for.
Vendor payment changes	A supplier has shortened terms or requires deposits.	Tighter terms accelerate the business's own cash needs.	Has a key supplier changed how or when they expect payment?	The change is minor or applies to a small share of purchases.
Cash tied up in inventory	More cash than usual is sitting in unsold inventory.	Inventory is cash that has not yet converted back to revenue.	How long is cash typically tied up before inventory sells?	Inventory levels are intentional and turning at a normal rate.

Table 2. Cash-flow signals that may indicate a widening timing gap.

Operational Signals

SIGNAL	WHAT MAY BE HAPPENING	WHY IT MATTERS	DISCOVERY QUESTION	MAY NOT INDICATE A NEED WHEN...
Aging equipment	Key equipment is older and nearing the end of its useful life.	Unplanned failure can halt operations at the worst time.	How much longer do you expect that equipment to hold up?	The equipment is well maintained with years of service left.
Frequent equipment repairs	Repair calls or costs on the same equipment are increasing.	Repair costs can approach or exceed the cost of replacement.	How do this year's repair costs compare to last year's?	Repairs are routine, scheduled maintenance rather than breakdowns.
Capacity constraints	The business is turning away work or running at full capacity.	Missed capacity is missed revenue, not just an inconvenience.	What is the business unable to take on right now?	Current capacity comfortably meets expected near-term demand.
Staffing increases	The business is hiring ahead of or in response to growth.	Payroll costs begin before new hires generate full revenue.	How long before new hires are fully productive?	Hiring is modest and easily absorbed by current cash flow.

New management	A new owner, partner, or manager has joined the business.	New leadership often brings new plans and priorities.	What is changing in the business under the new leadership?	The change is administrative with no operational shift.
Renovation plans	The business is planning to renovate or remodel a location.	Renovation often means reduced revenue during construction.	What is the plan for cash flow during the renovation period?	The renovation is minor and does not disrupt operations.
Relocation	The business plans to move to a new location.	Relocation combines moving costs with a revenue transition period.	What does the timeline and budget for the move look like?	The move is low-cost and involves no service interruption.
Additional locations	The business is opening a second or additional site.	New locations typically operate at a loss before ramping up.	How long until the new location is expected to break even?	The new location is self-funded from existing reserves.
Technology upgrades	The business is investing in new systems or software.	Upgrades often carry up-front licensing, hardware, or training costs.	What is driving the timing of this upgrade?	The upgrade is low-cost or spread over routine subscription fees.
Vehicle purchases	The business needs to add or replace vehicles.	Vehicles are a significant expense tied directly to operating capacity.	Is this vehicle replacing capacity or adding new capacity?	The need is small or already budgeted from cash reserves.
Supplier changes	The business has switched or is adding a new supplier.	New supplier relationships may require deposits or different terms.	Do the new terms change how much cash is tied up upfront?	The new terms are equal to or better than the prior arrangement.
Insurance-cost increases	Premiums for property, liability, or other coverage have risen.	Unexpected fixed-cost increases can strain monthly cash flow.	How has the increase affected the monthly budget?	The increase is small relative to overall operating costs.

Table 3. Operational signals tied to equipment, staffing, and facilities.

Seasonal and Calendar Signals

SIGNAL	WHAT MAY BE HAPPENING	WHY IT MATTERS	DISCOVERY QUESTION	MAY NOT INDICATE A NEED WHEN...
Holiday inventory	The business needs to stock up before a holiday selling season.	Inventory must be purchased well before it converts to revenue.	When do supplier deadlines fall relative to your holiday sales?	Inventory needs are modest and covered by current cash flow.
Tourism cycles	Revenue depends heavily on a tourist or visitor season.	Off-season expenses continue even when visitor revenue slows.	How does cash flow during the off-season compare to peak?	The business has ample reserves built from the prior season.
Weather-related demand	Revenue is closely tied to seasonal weather patterns.	An early or late season can shift the timing of cash needs.	How is this season's timing compared to a typical year?	Weather-driven demand has been consistent and well planned for.
Back-to-school periods	The business sees a seasonal spike tied to the school calendar.	Inventory or staffing must be in place before the spike arrives.	What needs to be ready before the season starts?	Preparation needs are minimal and already well in hand.
Year-end purchases	Customers or the business make purchases before year-end.	Year-end demand or equipment purchases can require upfront cash.	What purchases are planned before the year closes?	Planned purchases are small or already budgeted for.
Contract renewal dates	A major contract, lease, or agreement is up for renewal.	Renewal terms may change pricing, deposits, or obligations.	What is expected to change at renewal?	Renewal terms are expected to stay materially the same.
Tax season	The business is approaching a significant tax filing or payment period.	Renewal terms may change pricing, deposits, or obligations.	How is the business preparing for this tax period?	The obligation is already reserved for and unlikely to strain cash.

Industry trade cycles	A trade show, buying season, or industry cycle is approaching.	These cycles often require upfront costs ahead of the payoff.	What does the business need to be ready for that cycle?	Participation is low-cost or optional this cycle.
January expansion plans	The business is planning a new-year initiative or expansion.	January plans often require capital committed before year-end.	What needs to be in place before January?	The plan is still conceptual with no near-term capital need.
Slow periods before stronger seasons	The business is in a predictable lull before its busy season.	Preparing for the busy season often means spending during the slow one.	What needs to happen now to be ready for the next season?	The slow period requires no meaningful preparation spend.

Table 4. Seasonal and calendar-driven signals relevant to Q4 and year-end planning.

Debt and Financing Signals

SIGNAL	WHAT MAY BE HAPPENING	WHY IT MATTERS	DISCOVERY QUESTION	MAY NOT INDICATE A NEED WHEN...
High-frequency payments	The business is making frequent (e.g., daily or weekly) debt payments.	Frequent payments can compound pressure on daily cash flow.	How does the payment schedule line up with how revenue comes in?	The frequency matches the business's own cash-flow rhythm well.
Upcoming maturities	An existing financing obligation is approaching its end date.	Maturity is a natural, low-pressure point to review what comes next.	What does the business expect to need once this is paid off?	The client has no anticipated need once the obligation ends.
Balloon payments	A larger, lump-sum payment is scheduled ahead.	Balloon payments can strain cash flow without advance planning.	What is the plan for meeting that payment when it's due?	The client has already reserved funds to cover it comfortably.
Multiple overlapping obligations	The business is managing several financing obligations at once.	Overlapping payments can restrict flexibility and daily cash flow.	How are current obligations affecting what the business can invest in?	Combined payments are a small, manageable share of cash flow.
A recently completed payoff	The client has just finished paying off a prior obligation.	Freed-up cash flow may create room for a new, different priority.	What does the business plan to do with that freed-up capacity?	The client intends to simply retain the improved cash position.
A line of credit nearing its limit	An existing revolving line is close to fully drawn.	A maxed-out line leaves no cushion for unexpected needs.	What typically drives the line up to that point?	The line is drawn temporarily and paid back down quickly and predictably.
A prior loan that funded a temporary need	The original financing addressed a one-time, non-recurring need.	A new, different need may have emerged since.	What has come up since that original need was addressed?	No new need has emerged since the original transaction.
Financing that no longer fits the cash-flow cycle	A payment structure no longer matches how revenue arrives.	A mismatch between payments and revenue timing creates ongoing strain.	Does the current payment schedule still match how cash comes in?	The structure still aligns well with the business's current cycle.
A business expecting to need capital repeatedly	The business anticipates recurring, cyclical financing needs.	A recurring need may be better served by a different structure.	How often does a need like this tend to come up?	The current arrangement already addresses recurring needs well.

Table 5. Signals related to a client's existing financing obligations.

4. READ THE PREVIOUS DEAL FOR CLUES

The next appropriate financing conversation is often already outlined in the file from the last one. Before reaching out, it is worth spending a few minutes with the original transaction record.

Reviewing the original use of funds, the date of funding, and the amount financed establishes a factual baseline. From there, a few questions are worth answering: Was the original project completed as planned? Did it produce the expected return or business benefit? What was the repayment structure, and — where known — what is the current balance or payoff status? Perhaps most importantly, was the original need one-time, seasonal, or the kind of need likely to recur?

It is also worth remembering what else was true about the business at the time: what other obligations existed, what business events were discussed but not yet completed, and what questions the client asked during the original transaction. Clients often mention a next step — an expansion, a piece of equipment, a location — that has since moved from “someday” to “now.” A record of that conversation, even an informal one, can point directly to the next useful question.

The type of financing used previously offers its own clues, though never a certain answer:

- Inventory financing may point toward a recurring seasonal cycle worth revisiting each year.
- Equipment financing may open a natural conversation about additional capacity if the business has grown.
- A renovation completed a year or two ago may lead into a conversation about the expansion it was meant to support.
- Financing used to bridge receivables may reveal an ongoing, structural cash-conversion timing issue rather than a one-time event.
- A debt-refinancing transaction is a natural prompt to review what other obligations remain outstanding.
- A revolving line of credit may simply need monitoring for qualified draws as new, confirmed needs arise.
-

None of this should be read as a formula. A successful prior transaction is a data point, not a decision. The right next step still depends on what has actually changed — which is exactly what the discovery conversation is for.

5. DISCOVERY QUESTIONS THAT DO NOT SOUND LIKE A SALES PITCH

Clients can often tell the difference between a business question and a sales opening with-in the first sentence. The questions below are organized by topic so a Referral Partner can choose the ones that fit what is actually going on in a client's business, rather than reaching for a generic script.

Used well, these questions are asked in service of understanding the business — not as a lead-in to a predetermined product. The goal in every conversation is to listen for operational detail — what changed, what it costs, when it needs to happen — before saying anything about financing at all. A client who is doing the talking is giving a Referral Partner exactly what is needed to know whether, and how, to follow up.

DISCOVERY QUESTION WHEEL

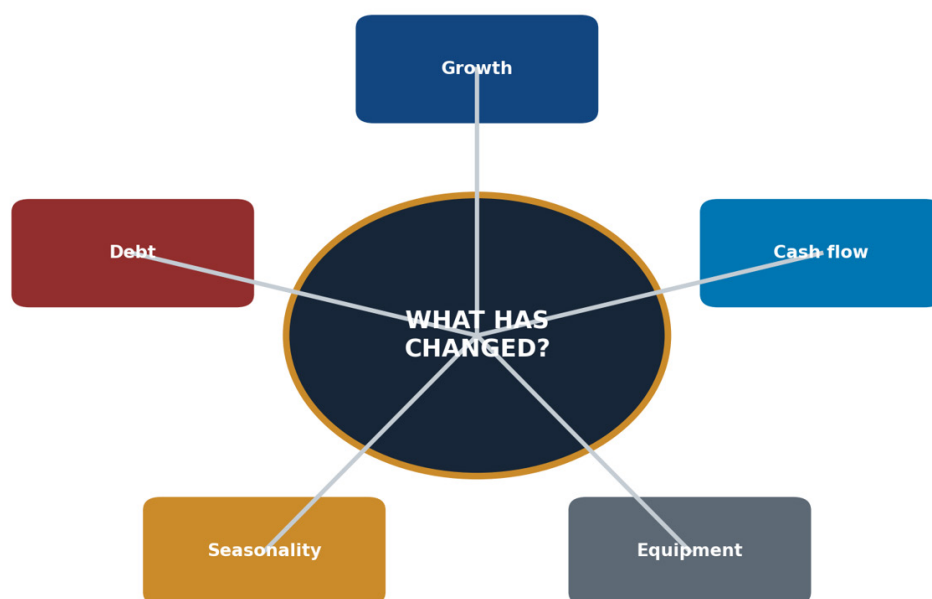


Figure 4. The right discovery question depends on what is changing in the business.

Growth

- “What has changed most in the business since we last worked together?”
- “Are you seeing demand that the business cannot currently support?”
- “Is there a project, customer, or location you want to pursue next?”
- “What would prevent the business from taking advantage of that opportunity?”

Cash Flow

- “Are customers paying on the same schedule they were last year?”
- “Is more cash tied up in receivables or inventory?”
- “Are payroll, rent, taxes, or vendor payments becoming harder to coordinate?”
- “Which part of the operating cycle creates the most pressure?”

Equipment and Capacity

- “Is the current equipment keeping up with demand?”
- “Are repair costs beginning to compete with replacement costs?”
- “Would additional equipment create capacity, or simply replace an aging asset?”

Seasonality and Q4 Planning

- “What does the business need to purchase before the busy season begins?”
- “When will seasonal inventory begin converting back into cash?”
- “Are you preparing for a stronger Q4, or protecting against a slower one?”
- “What major expense must be handled before year-end?”
- “Is anything planned for January that should be financed before it becomes urgent?”

Existing Debt

- “Have any financing obligations changed since we last spoke?”
- “Are current payments limiting what the business can invest in?”
- “Are there any maturities or balloon payments approaching?”
- “Does the current payment schedule match the way revenue enters the business?”

Strategic Planning

- “What is the next important decision the business needs to make?”
- “If capital were available, what would you do — and why?”
- “What would have to be true for that investment to make sense?”
- “What happens if the business waits six months?”

6. FROM SIGNAL TO FINANCING CONVERSATION

Recognizing a signal and having a real financing conversation are two different things, separated by several steps that protect both the client and the Referral Partner from moving too fast. The following progression turns an observation into a properly developed opportunity.

FROM SIGNAL TO FINANCING CONVERSATION



Each step clarifies whether the opportunity should move forward.

Figure 5. Move from observation to submission only after the business need is verified.

1. Observe a business signal.
2. Ask a discovery question.
3. Confirm the business need.
4. Understand timing and urgency.
5. Estimate the amount required.
6. Determine how the investment may produce value or solve a timing problem.
7. Review current obligations and repayment capacity.
8. Consider whether financing is appropriate.
9. Match the need with a suitable structure.
10. Submit only when the opportunity is sufficiently developed.

BUSINESS SIGNAL	INITIAL QUESTION	INFORMATION TO CONFIRM	POTENTIAL CONVERSATION
Receivables are aging	Are customers taking longer to pay?	Aging report, payment timing, cash needs	Working-capital timing
Inventory is increasing	Is the buildup planned or unexpected?	Sales forecast, inventory cycle, seasonality	Seasonal financing
Equipment repairs are rising	Is replacement becoming more economical?	Repair costs, replacement estimate, useful life	Equipment or term financing
Several debts remain outstanding	Are current payments restricting cash flow?	Debt schedule, balances, payment frequency	Refinancing review
New location planned	When will it open and begin generating revenue?	Project budget, timeline, expected ramp-up	Expansion financing

Table 6. Examples are illustrative, not automatic product recommendations.

Skipping steps to move faster usually costs more time later, when a submission comes back incomplete or a client feels rushed into a conversation they were not ready to have.

7. THE OPPORTUNITY SCORECARD

Not every client deserves a phone call this month, and not every phone call needs to be about financing. The Opportunity Scorecard below gives Referral Partners a simple, consistent way to compare clients against one another and decide where to spend limited outreach time before Q4.

Score each client from 0 to 3 in each of the twelve categories below, based on the best current information available. The total possible score is 36 points.

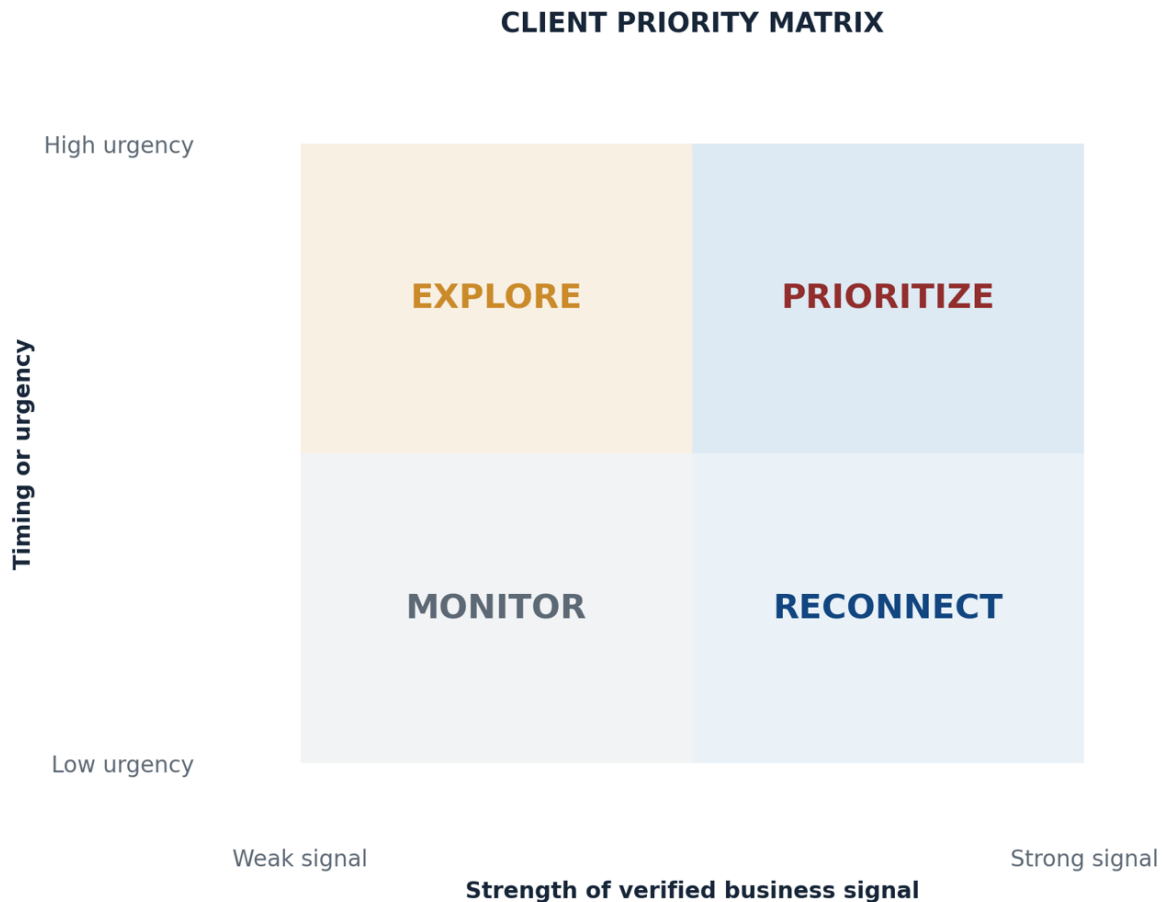


Figure 6. Signal strength and timing help determine which relationships deserve attention.

Scoring Scale

SCORE	MEANING
0	No current indication
1	Weak or unconfirmed indication
2	Meaningful indication requiring follow-up
3	Clear, time-sensitive, and verified indication

Scorecard Categories

CATEGORY	WHAT TO LOOK FOR	SCORE (0-3)	NOTES
Recent business change	Has something changed since the last funded transaction or last conversation?	____ / 3	
Specific upcoming use of funds	Is there a defined project, purchase, or need on the horizon?	____ / 3	
Timing or urgency	Is there a deadline or window driving the need?	____ / 3	
Seasonal relevance	Does the business have a seasonal cycle relevant to the coming quarter?	____ / 3	
Working-capital pressure	Are cash-flow signals (receivables, payables, cash balance) evident?	____ / 3	
Growth or expansion activity	Is the business growing, hiring, or expanding into new territory?	____ / 3	
Equipment or operating need	Is equipment aging, at capacity, or requiring frequent repair?	____ / 3	
Existing debt concern	Are current obligations creating pressure, overlap, or mismatch?	____ / 3	
Strength of client relationship	How responsive and trusting is this relationship currently?	____ / 3	
Availability of current financial information	Is recent financial information accessible or already on file?	____ / 3	
Client responsiveness	Has the client engaged with recent outreach or communication?	____ / 3	
Suitability for a financing conversation	Is this the right time to raise the topic at all?	____ / 3	

Table 7. The complete Opportunity Scorecard. A standalone printable version appears in Appendix A.

Prioritization Framework

SCORE RANGE	TIER	RECOMMENDED ACTION
0-9	Monitor	No immediate outreach beyond normal relationship maintenance.
10-18	Reconnect	Contact the client to learn what has changed.
19-27	Explore	Conduct a more focused discovery conversation.
28-36	Prioritize	The client may deserve prompt attention, provided the underlying need and fit are verified.

Important

The score does not predict approval, credit quality, or financing eligibility. It is a relationship-management and outreach tool only — not a credit-scoring or underwriting method.

8. THREE EXISTING-CLIENT SCENARIOS

The scenarios below are hypothetical and illustrative. They are meant to show how a signal, a discovery question, and a verification step fit together — not to suggest that every conversation resolves so neatly, or that financing is guaranteed in any of them.

Scenario 1 — The Seasonal Retailer

A home-goods retailer financed inventory 14 months ago to prepare for a holiday selling season. Reconnecting in late summer, the Referral Partner asks a simple question: “What does the business need to purchase before the busy season begins?” The answer reveals that key suppliers have moved their order deadlines several weeks earlier this year, while the store’s own customer revenue — as in past years — will not meaningfully arrive until after the season begins.

- **Signal:** a seasonal inventory cycle with a shifting supplier deadline.
- **Discovery question:** the one above, plus “When will this season’s inventory begin converting back into cash?”
- **What the Referral Partner verifies:** the size of the planned purchase, the new supplier deadline, and how this year’s sales forecast compares to last year’s actual results.
- **Potential conversation:** seasonal working-capital financing timed to the earlier deadline.
- **What could make financing inappropriate:** sufficient reserves from a strong prior season, or a forecast that does not justify the added inventory investment.

Scenario 2 — The Growing Service Business

A commercial cleaning company that financed a vehicle purchase last year has since won two new contracts. Fulfilling them means hiring additional crew and purchasing equipment before the new customers' first invoices are due — invoices that, under standard commercial payment terms, may not be paid for 30 to 60 days after work begins.

This is a case where a healthy, growing business still faces a working-capital gap: the cost of serving new customers arrives well before the revenue those customers generate. The discovery conversation focuses on the timing of new payroll and equipment costs relative to when the new contracts begin paying, and on how much of the gap the business's own cash flow can absorb without help. The potential financing conversation centers on bridging that specific, time-limited gap — not on funding the business's activity in general.

Scenario 3 — The Established Restaurant

A restaurant that financed a point-of-sale upgrade two years ago is now considering a slower-season renovation. In conversation, the Referral Partner also learns that a piece of kitchen equipment has needed three repairs this year, and that the business is still making payments on two prior obligations.

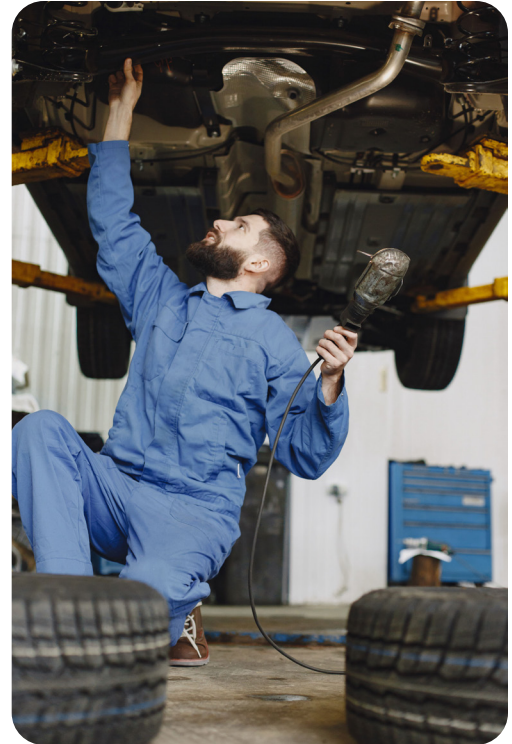
Rather than combining these into one oversized request, the Referral Partner separates them into three distinct questions: whether the aging equipment needs to be replaced, whether the renovation has a defined budget and timeline tied to the slow season, and whether the current debt structure is creating enough pressure to warrant a separate review. Each question may or may not lead to a financing conversation on its own — and treating them separately gives the client a clearer picture of what each actually requires, rather than one large, undifferentiated ask.



9. DETAILED FIELD EXAMPLE: FINDING THE DEAL BEHIND THE DEAL

Sixteen months ago, a specialty auto-repair shop financed a piece of diagnostic equipment. The transaction was straightforward: a defined amount, a clear use of funds, and a repayment structure the owner had no trouble meeting. The Referral Partner closed the file and moved on to new leads, but had scheduled a standing quarterly check-in — a habit built into the monthly book-review routine described in Section 10.

At the scheduled check-in, the Referral Partner opened with a business question rather than a financing one: “What has changed most in the shop since we last talked?” The owner mentioned, almost in passing, that the shop had added a second service bay six months earlier and was now booking appointments two weeks out — a sign of real capacity pressure.



The Referral Partner’s first assumption was that the shop might need financing for another piece of diagnostic equipment, similar to the original transaction. A few more questions told a different story. The equipment itself was not the bottleneck — the shop had room to take on more vehicles at once — but the owner had been putting off a planned lift purchase because payroll for the new technician, hired in anticipation of the added bay, was straining cash flow in the months before appointment volume caught up.

Reviewing recent bank activity and current obligations, with the owner’s permission, confirmed the picture: the diagnostic equipment loan was on schedule and nearly paid off, but a temporary cash-flow gap — driven by the timing between new payroll costs and the appointment backlog converting into paid invoices — was the more immediate and better-defined need.

Scoring the Opportunity

Recent business change (3), specific upcoming use of funds (2, still being defined), timing or urgency (2), seasonal relevance (0), working-capital pressure (3), growth or expansion activity (3), equipment or operating need (1), existing debt concern (1, prior loan nearly paid off), strength of relationship (3), availability of financial information (3), client responsiveness (3), suitability for a financing conversation (3) — a total of 27, placing the client solidly in the Explore tier.

Based on that score and a clearer understanding of the actual need, the Referral Partner scheduled a follow-up conversation to gather current financial information and better define the timing and amount involved in bridging the payroll-to-invoice gap — a working-capital conversation, not an equipment conversation.

What if the Referral Partner had Simply Asked, “Do You Need More Money?”

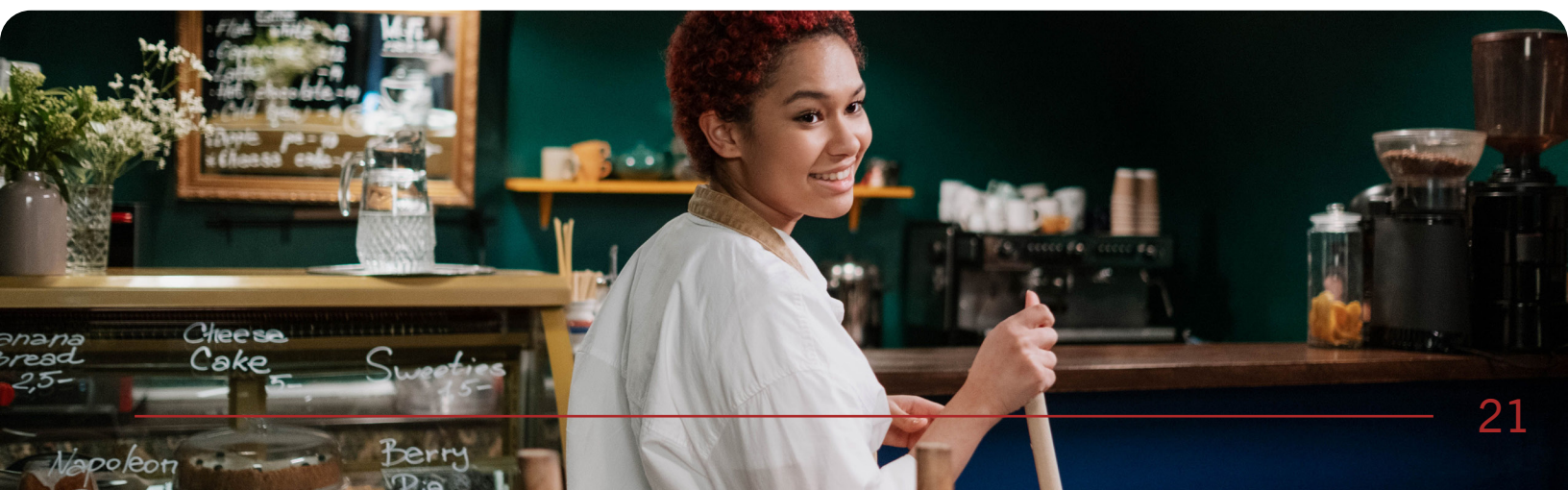
The likely answer would have been no — the shop owner did not think of the situation as a financing need at all; he thought of it as a busy, if slightly stressful, stretch of growth. A generic question would have closed the conversation before the actual opportunity became visible. It took a specific question about what had changed, followed by a few more questions about where the pressure was actually coming from, to find a need the owner had not yet framed as one.

The Referral Partner has not secured a deal. What has been identified is a well-defined, time-sensitive opportunity — a working-capital need tied to a specific and verifiable cause — that is ready for an appropriate preliminary review.

10. BUILDING A REPEATABLE BOOK-MINING SYSTEM

A single round of outreach before Q4 is useful. A repeatable process that runs monthly or quarterly is what turns an existing book into a durable, ongoing source of well-qualified conversations. The steps below describe that system.

1. Export or review the existing client list.
2. Update contact and business information.
3. Segment clients by industry, funding date, original use of funds, seasonality, and relationship status.
4. Identify upcoming business or calendar triggers.
5. Score clients using the Opportunity Scorecard.
6. Select a manageable outreach group.
7. Prepare one personalized business question for each client.
8. Record what changed.
9. Schedule the next follow-up.
10. Submit only appropriately developed opportunities.



Recommended CRM Fields

Whatever system a Referral Partner uses to track a client book — a CRM, a spreadsheet, or something simpler — the following fields make the process above repeatable:

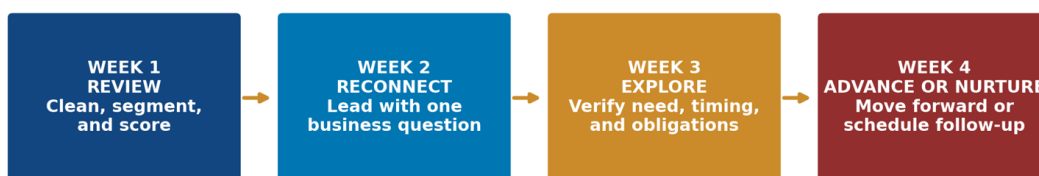
- Last funding date
- Original use of funds
- Original amount
- Current financing status, if known
- Industry
- Seasonal period
- Next expected business event
- Last meaningful conversation
- Key business change
- Next follow-up date
- Opportunity Score
- Current need
- Timing
- Required documents
- Outcome
- Next action

This is a working list, not a mandate to collect everything at once. Referral Partners should record only what is genuinely useful for the next conversation, and should follow applicable privacy, consent, recordkeeping, and communication requirements when maintaining client information.

11. THE 30-DAY Q4 PIPELINE PLAN

The four-week plan below turns the process in Section 10 into a concrete, time-bound project. The weekly activity targets are illustrative examples — useful starting points, not universal requirements.

THE 30-DAY Q4 PIPELINE PLAN



A repeatable cycle for turning an existing book into better-timed conversations.

Figure 7. A four-week cycle turns book review into a repeatable pipeline-development habit.

Week One: Review

- Clean and segment the client list.
- Identify clients funded within relevant prior periods.
- Review original uses of funds.
- Note seasonal and year-end triggers.
- Apply preliminary Opportunity Scores.

Week Two: Reconnect

- Contact the highest-priority clients.
- Lead with a business-specific question.
- Update information in the CRM.
- Identify changes without forcing a financing discussion.

Week Three: Explore

- Conduct deeper conversations with clients who have a verified need.
- Clarify purpose, amount, timing, repayment considerations, and existing obligations.
- Request current information where appropriate.

Week Four: Advance or Nurture

- Advance appropriate opportunities.
- Schedule future follow-ups for clients who are not ready.
- Remove clients who are not a fit.
- Review what signals produced the best conversations.
- Prepare the next 30-day cycle.

12. WHAT RESPONSIBLE BOOK MINING IS — AND IS NOT

The word “mining” can sound extractive, as though a client book were a resource to be depleted rather than a set of relationships to be maintained. The comparison below draws the line between the two.

RESPONSIBLE RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT	WHAT IT IS NOT
Asking what has changed	Repeatedly asking whether the client needs money
Using known business context	Sending the same message to every client
Identifying needs early	Manufacturing urgency
Explaining tradeoffs	Pushing a predetermined product
Respecting a client’s “not now”	Continuing unwanted solicitation
Recording the next useful follow-up	Contacting the client without a reason
Confirming repayment considerations	Focusing only on the funding amount

Table 8. The distinction is not tone — it is whether outreach is grounded in the client’s business or the Referral Partner’s pipeline.

The objective is to remain useful enough that clients involve the Referral Partner before a financing need becomes urgent — not to generate contact for its own sake.

13. REPEAT BUSINESS, RELATIONSHIPS, AND RESIDUAL OPPORTUNITY

Responsible, ongoing attention to an existing client book supports more than a single quarter's pipeline. Over time, it can contribute to:

- Repeat financing opportunities as a business's needs evolve.
- Additional draws on qualifying revolving credit, where appropriate.
- Stronger client retention and a longer relationship lifespan.
- Referrals to other business owners the client knows.
- More predictable pipeline development, rather than reliance on new-lead volume alone.
- Ongoing commission or residual opportunity where permitted under the applicable Referral Partner agreement.

These benefits are a byproduct of good relationship management, not a justification for it. A Referral Partner's compensation should never take priority over a client's actual financial interests — and the surest way to protect both the relationship and the referral opportunity is to keep the client's business, not the next commission, at the center of every conversation.

14. THE DEAL YOU HAVE NOT FOUND YET

Somewhere in your client list is a deal you have not found yet. It may be:

Call to Action

1. Select 20 existing clients.
2. Apply the Opportunity Scorecard.
3. Choose the five relationships with the strongest reason for a conversation.
4. Ask one useful question this week.

- A seasonal inventory need
- A receivables gap
- An aging equipment issue
- A future expansion
- A refinancing conversation
- A recurring working-capital need
- Or simply a relationship that deserves a thoughtful check-in

The opportunity does not begin with a product. It begins with understanding what has changed in the business.

SOURCE LIST AND FACT-CHECK APPENDIX

This white paper is a practical, process-oriented field guide built on general small-business financing practices rather than on published statistics. No economic data, market statistics, or third-party figures have been cited or relied upon in the sections above, and none have been invented or approximated for this guide.

For Referral Partners who wish to supplement this guide with current economic or small-business context — for example, in a client-facing Q4 planning conversation — the following primary sources are recommended for verified, current data at the time of use:

- Federal Reserve (including the Federal Reserve Small Business Credit Survey)
- U.S. Small Business Administration
- U.S. Census Bureau
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Any statistic drawn from these sources for future use should be cited to the original source with its publication date and data period, and should not be used to make claims about the condition of an individual client’s business.

Fact-Check Table

CLAIM OR STATISTIC	EXACT WORDING USED	SOURCE	PUBLICATION DATE	DATA PERIOD	VERIFICATION NOTES
Not applicable	No external statistics or data claims are made in this white paper.	N/A	N/A	N/A	Confirmed: content is process guidance, not data-dependent.

APPENDICES: STANDALONE TOOLS

The five appendices below reproduce the guide’s core working tools in standalone form so each can be printed or extracted on its own for daily use.

APPENDIX A — THE OPPORTUNITY SCORECARD (PRINTABLE WORKSHEET)

Client / Business Name: _____

Date Completed: _____

Completed By: _____

Score each category from 0 to 3 using the scale below, then total all twelve scores.

SCORE	MEANING
0	No current indication
1	Weak or unconfirmed indication
2	Meaningful indication requiring follow-up
3	Clear, time-sensitive, and verified indication

CATEGORY	WHAT TO LOOK FOR	SCORE (0-3)	NOTES
Recent business change	Has something changed since the last funded transaction or last conversation?	____ / 3	
Specific upcoming use of funds	Is there a defined project, purchase, or need on the horizon?	____ / 3	
Timing or urgency	Is there a deadline or window driving the need?	____ / 3	
Seasonal relevance	Does the business have a seasonal cycle relevant to the coming quarter?	____ / 3	
Working-capital pressure	Are cash-flow signals (receivables, payables, cash balance) evident?	____ / 3	
Growth or expansion activity	Is the business growing, hiring, or expanding into new territory?	____ / 3	
Equipment or operating need	Is equipment aging, at capacity, or requiring frequent repair?	____ / 3	
Existing debt concern	Are current obligations creating pressure, overlap, or mismatch?	____ / 3	
Strength of client relationship	How responsive and trusting is this relationship currently?	____ / 3	

Availability of current financial information	Is recent financial information accessible or already on file?	____ / 3	
Client responsiveness	Has the client engaged with recent outreach or communication?	____ / 3	
Suitability for a financing conversation	Is this the right time to raise the topic at all?	____ / 3	

TOTAL SCORE: ____ / 36

SCORE RANGE	TIER	RECOMMENDED ACTION
0-9	Monitor	No immediate outreach beyond normal relationship maintenance.
10-18	Reconnect	Contact the client to learn what has changed.
19-27	Explore	Conduct a more focused discovery conversation.
28-36	Prioritize	The client may deserve prompt attention, provided the underlying need and fit are verified.

Reminder

This score is a relationship-management and outreach tool only. It does not predict approval, credit quality, or financing eligibility.

APPENDIX B — PRE-CONVERSATION PLANNING WORKSHEET

Complete this worksheet before reconnecting with an existing client to keep the conversation focused, informed, and consultative.

Client / Business Name: _____

Industry: _____

Date of Last Funding: _____

Original Amount Funded: _____

Original Use of Funds: _____

Current Balance / Payoff Status (if known): _____

Key Relationship Contact: _____

Date of Last Meaningful Conversation: _____

Business Signal(s) Observed: _____

Opportunity Score (see Appendix A): _____

Planned Discovery Question(s): _____

Information Needed to Confirm the Need: _____

Notes From the Most Recent Conversation: _____

Next Follow-Up Date: _____

APPENDIX C — EXISTING CLIENT OUTREACH TRACKER

Use this tracker to log outreach across a batch of prioritized clients during a book-review cycle.

CLIENT NAME	LAST FUNDED	ORIGINAL USE OF FUNDS	OPP. SCORE	SIGNAL OBSERVED	LAST CONTACT	OUTCOME/NOTES	NEXT FOLLOW-UP

APPENDIX D — THE 30-DAY Q4 PIPELINE PLAN (ONE-PAGE SUMMARY)

Week One: Review

- Clean and segment the client list.
- Identify clients funded within relevant prior periods.
- Review original uses of funds.
- Note seasonal and year-end triggers.
- Apply preliminary Opportunity Scores.

Week Two: Reconnect

- Contact the highest-priority clients.
- Lead with a business-specific question.
- Update information in the CRM.
- Identify changes without forcing a financing discussion.

Week Three: Explore

- Conduct deeper conversations with clients who have a verified need.
- Clarify purpose, amount, timing, repayment considerations, and existing obligations.
- Request current information where appropriate.

Week Four: Advance or Nurture

- Advance appropriate opportunities.
- Schedule future follow-ups for clients who are not ready.
- Remove clients who are not a fit.
- Review what signals produced the best conversations.
- Prepare the next 30-day cycle.

APPENDIX E — FACT-CHECK TABLE

CLAIM OR STATISTIC	EXACT WORDING USED	SOURCE	PUBLICATION DATE	DATA PERIOD	VERIFICATION NOTES
Not applicable	No external statistics or data claims are made in this white paper.	N/A	N/A	N/A	Confirmed: content is process guidance, not data-dependent.