American Banker recently reported that the employee composition among U.S. major banks still favored men, and in one major bank, women only made up 37 percent of mid-level leadership positions. In a 2014 survey, 48 percent of U.S. women respondents said women are not equally represented in senior positions within the financial industry. The survey, conducted by a financial careers organization, found there was a need for inclusion practices, training and services that provided women a better opportunity to advance in their careers.

Alison Felix, Denver Branch executive and vice president for the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, had a similar observation when reaching out to banks in the Rocky Mountain region of the Tenth Federal Reserve District.

“We had noticed in the Rocky Mountain zone there were very few women in banking leadership,” she said.

The Denver Branch wanted to provide a forum to help women succeed in their current roles and advance in their banking organization, create a network for women leaders and potential leaders, and at the same time, broaden the Kansas City Fed’s network of bankers.

More than 100 women in management positions in the banking industry attended "Banking and the Economy: A Forum for
Women in Banking”, a day-long event Oct. 8 at the Denver Branch of the Kansas City Fed.

The goals of the forum, Felix said, were to offer attendees resources on the economy, banking and the Kansas City Fed, and to provide an opportunity for women bankers to network with banking leaders across the Rocky Mountain region and Federal Reserve staff.

The forum addressed topics critical to bankers today, including regional economic data, a discussion of regional banking conditions, cybersecurity, and creating and cultivating diverse networks, teams and boards.

Lilly Marks, a member of Kansas City Fed’s Board of Directors and vice president for Health Affairs for the University of Colorado and Anschutz Medical Campus, was the luncheon keynote speaker. She shared her career experiences and the successes and challenges of leadership.

“It is rare in the banking industry to have so many women together in one room,” Felix said. “The forum provided a great opportunity for me to network with women from across the three state region served by the Kansas City Fed’s Denver Branch, which includes Colorado, northern New Mexico and Wyoming.”

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KEVIN WRIGHT, EDITOR

COMMENTS/QUESTIONS are welcome and should be sent to teneditors@kc.frb.org.