PNC Foundation Commits $600,000 To Launch Black Business Boost Fund For Underinvested Neighborhoods Of Milwaukee

The Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation to administer educational and technical support, access to equity and debt capital

The program aims to advance economic parity for Black entrepreneurs and business owners

MILWAUKEE, Oct. 13, 2021 – The PNC Foundation is awarding a $600,000 grant to support the launch of the Black Business Boost Fund, an ecosystem designed to increase opportunities for Black entrepreneurs and business owners in underinvested neighborhoods of Milwaukee. The program will include direct equity investments, technical assistance, credit recovery, incubation, access to co-working space, working capital and strategic, ongoing one-on-one mentoring.

The fund, administered by the Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC), is the second PNC pilot program of its kind, and will provide direct micro equity investment, and educational and technical support for qualified businesses. The initiative aligns with PNC's broader commitment announced in June 2020 to dedicate $1 billion to help end systemic racism and support the economic empowerment of Black Americans and low- and moderate-income communities.

"Today we must be bold about the initiatives that can change the narrative for Black businesses in historically under-resourced neighborhoods. We believe this alignment between the public and private sector helps demonstrate our pledge to be an active participant in the journey towards economic vitality in areas of Milwaukee that need it the most," said Chris Hermann, PNC regional president for Wisconsin. "When you teach a person to fish, they retain a lifelong skill. But if you help them buy a boat and hire a crew, they can then create a long-lasting business and build a legacy of wealth for their family."

Black Business Boost is designed to connect at least 100 qualified individuals and business entities with resources and "friend- and family-" type capital. The fund will support a "concept-to-launch" approach to help a business - regardless of where they stand in their lifecycle, covering everything from early stage ideation to long-term sustainability strategies.

"We are thrilled to advance a unique model that will support Black-owned businesses, the economic engines in the heart of our communities," said Wendy Baumann, WWBIC president and chief visionary officer. "What differentiates this program is access to equity. With our quality training and microlending experience, we will bring the needed expertise to support participants with credit repair, greater access to co-working spaces, accelerators and lending solutions to advance business growth."

WWBIC, one of Wisconsin's first Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI), and the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee (HACM) will partner to deliver technical assistance, and educational and mentoring opportunities.

“Black Business Boost is designed to help close gaps in economic opportunity that have long kept Black entrepreneurs and business owners from starting and growing their businesses,” said Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett. “I am thankful to the PNC Foundation, WWBIC, HACM and other partners for launching this innovative pilot project that will support a new generation of Black businesses and build a stronger, more equitable Milwaukee.”

The PNC grant will be dispersed into the fund over a three-year period. Profits from the investment will be reinvested into succeeding program cohorts and other philanthropic and institutional support to continue to expand the program’s reach. Interested entrepreneurs and business owners can register at: https://www.wwbic.com/black-business-boost/.

“The Housing Authority is pleased to join this journey with our longtime partners PNC Foundation and WWBIC to launch Black Business Boost and elevate opportunities for Black entrepreneurs to overcome barriers to their success,” said HACM Acting Secretary-Executive Director Willie L. Hines, Jr. “This new fund will complement other economic development programs and investments being made in the area through the Choice Neighborhood Initiative, including hundreds of new housing units, neighborhood amenities, business facade improvements and quality-of-life initiatives.”

Patient and flexible repayment terms are available to allow an entrepreneur the time to develop, grow and scale theei business. No payment will be required for the first two years, followed by an additional year of priority returns only. After the third investment year, the business owner will have the option of paying off the investment or converting it to a traditional amortizing loan. This structure alleviates the financial burden during the most crucial years and allows the business owner to focus on building a viable and sustainable business.

“Equitable access to economic development resources is critical to the health of our city, and more resources are needed specifically to support our community’s Black entrepreneurs and business owners,” said Milwaukee Common Council President and 2nd District Alderman Cavalier Johnson. “Black Business Boost will provide local, tailored support that can fuel opportunities for economic empowerment and strengthen Milwaukee’s local economy.”

The Black Business Boost Fund is part of a broader commitment by PNC to provide support in underserved communities in Wisconsin with more than $27 million already invested in 2021 for economic empowerment, community development and early education. In the last decade, PNC has provided more than $200,000 to support WWBIC in its mission to advance business growth and financial education for local businesses. In Westlawn Gardens, PNC Tax Credit Solutions Group, a PNC Real Estate business, has invested more than $150 million in low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) equity and more than $60 million in financing to support more than 600 units of high-quality affordable housing.

The Wisconsin Women’s Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC), is a leading, statewide innovative economic development corporation “Putting Dreams to Work” and is one of Wisconsin’s first Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI). WWBIC’s primary focus is on women, people of color, lower-income individuals and Veterans and Military connected families, providing direct lending and access to fair

and responsible capital, quality business training, one-on-one technical business assistance and education to increase financial capability. Since 1987, WWBIC has lent over $85 million in micro and small business loans with a current loan portfolio of $23.5 million and over 600 active borrowers. To learn more about WWBIC visit: www.wwbic.com.

Founded in 1944, the Housing Authority of the City of Milwaukee (HACM) provides high-quality affordable housing options to over 10,000 households in Milwaukee. HACM's award-winning programs foster strong and inclusive communities that support self-sufficiency, good quality of life and the opportunity to thrive. Learn more at www.hacm.org.

The PNC Foundation, which receives its principal funding from The PNC Financial Services Group (www.pnc.com), actively supports organizations that provide services for the benefit of communities in which it has a significant presence. The foundation focuses its philanthropic mission on early childhood education and community and economic development, which includes the arts and culture. Through Grow Up Great, its signature cause that began in 2004, PNC has created a bilingual $500 million, multi-year initiative to help prepare children from birth to age 5 for success in school and life.

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