

# The Equity Fund

2023 - 2024

grant

eligibility

guidelines

and

application

instructions



# Program Description

PFund Foundation, in partnership with Quorum, is proud to announce the 2023-24 round of Equity Fund grants. This program invests in queer entrepreneurs and small businesses from across the Upper Midwest, with a particular focus on queer entrepreneurs of color and queer-owned businesses in rural areas. PFund and Quorum are offering a record \$435,000 in grant fundings across three distinct cohorts this year. Each grant recipient receives:

- **Grants ranging from \$5,000 up to \$30,000** to be used to support building small business capacity and developing queer entrepreneurship across the region.
- Access to five **training sessions customized to the needs of small business owners**. Grantees from the Twin Cities metropolitan area will be expected to attend in-person trainings organized by PFund. Trainings for grantees from greater Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, and Wisconsin will be expected to attend virtual learning sessions organized by Quorum.
- **A one-year membership to Quorum**, Minnesota's LGBT chamber of commerce. Grantees from outside Minnesota will be given modest stipends to purchase an annual membership from a local queer chamber of commerce (for example, the Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce).

# How to Apply

1. **Review the eligibility requirements** for each Equity Fund grant category (on the following pages) and find the Equity Fund category that fits best for you. It's one easy online application, no matter which area (Twin Cities, Minnesota, or Midwest) you're applying from.
2. **Create an account on [Submittable](#)** (if you already have an existing account you can use that account to apply).
3. Consider **attending the virtual information session** PFund will hold about Equity Fund grants on Wednesday, August 9 at noon. [You can register for the event by clicking here](#). If you can't make it in person, we'll post a video of the webinar on our website to review whenever it's convenient for you.
4. **Complete all questions** in the online application.
5. **Upload the required attachments** to your application. All Equity Fund applicants are required to submit the following documentation:
  - a. A one-page [lean business plan document](#) that outlines the fundamentals of your business.
  - b. Sole proprietors must submit IRS Form 1040 Schedule C. Partnerships must submit IRS Form 1065. Corporations may submit *EITHER* IRS Form 1120 *OR* a 12-month profit-and-loss statement.
6. **All application materials must be completed and submitted by 5:00 p.m. on September 15, 2023. No exceptions.**

# The Equity Fund

## for Twin Cities Queer Entrepreneurs of Color

### Eligibility Guidelines

*Grantseekers must meet all of the following criteria to apply:*

- You identify as LGBTQ+ and as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color.
- Your business is located within the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area.
- Your business has been in operation for at least one year.
- The annual gross revenue of your business for your most recently completed fiscal year was \$250,000 or less.
- Your business has 20 or fewer employees.

### Grantee Obligations

*If awarded a grant, you must agree to the following conditions:*

- You agree to **only use grant funds for the business purposes** outlined in your proposal. Personal uses of funds are not allowed.
- You agree to **provide PFund Foundation with the paperwork necessary** to process grant payments (signed grant agreement, IRS W9 form, and your business's logo).
- **You agree to attend 80% of the cohort meetings** over the course of the program. Five meetings/trainings will be organized by PFund and held in-person at various locations in the Twin Cities between November 2023 and March 2024. **Meeting dates will be 11/14/23, 12/12/23, 1/9/24, 2/13/24, and 3/12/24.** Most trainings will be held in-person from 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. at the Quorum offices in St. Paul. The February meeting will be held virtually and with other Equity Fund cohort members.
- You agree to **complete an online survey and produce a report** on how you used grant funds at the conclusion of the grant period (due in spring 2024).



# The Equity Fund

## for Minnesotan Queer Entrepreneurs

### Eligibility Guidelines

*Grantseekers must meet all of the following criteria to apply:*

- You identify as LGBTQ+.
- Your business is located within Minnesota.
- Your business has been in operation for at least one year.
- The annual gross revenue of your business for your most recently completed fiscal year was \$250,000 or less.
- Your business has 20 or fewer employees.
- Queer entrepreneurs of color and rural queer businesses are especially encouraged to apply.

### Grantee Obligations

*If awarded a grant, you must agree to the following conditions:*

- You agree to **only use grant funds for the business purposes** outlined in your proposal. Personal uses of funds are not allowed.
- You agree to **provide PFund Foundation with the paperwork necessary** to process grant payments (signed grant agreement, IRS W9 Form, and your business's logo).
- **You agree to attend 80% of the monthly cohort meetings** over the course of the program. Five virtual training sessions will be organized by Quorum and held between November 2023 and March 2024. **Trainings will be held on Zoom from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. on 12/20/23, 1/17/24, 2/21/24, 3/20/24, and 4/17/24.** The February meeting will be a virtual session with all Equity Fund cohorts.
- You agree to **complete an online survey and produce a report** on how you used grant funds at the conclusion of the grant period (due in spring 2024).

# The Equity Fund

## for Midwestern Queer Entrepreneurs of Color

### Eligibility Guidelines

*Grantseekers must meet all of the following criteria to apply:*

- You identify as LGBTQ+ and Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color.
- Your business is located within North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa, Wisconsin or the First Nations therein.
- Your business has been in operation for at least one year.
- The annual gross revenue of your business for your most recently completed fiscal year was \$250,000 or less.
- Your business has 20 or fewer employees.

### Grantee Obligations

*If awarded a grant, you must agree to the following conditions:*

- You agree to **only use grant funds for the business purposes** outlined in your proposal. Personal uses of funds are not allowed.
- You agree to **provide PFund Foundation with the paperwork necessary** to process grant payments (signed grant agreement, IRS W9 Form, and your business's logo).
- **You agree to attend 80% of the monthly cohort meetings** over the course of the program. Five virtual training sessions will be organized by Quorum and held between November 2023 and March 2024. **Trainings will be held on Zoom from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. on 11/15/23, 12/13/23, 1/10/24, 2/13/24, 3/13/24.** The February meeting will be a virtual session with all Equity Fund cohorts.
- You agree to **complete an online survey and produce a report** on how you used grant funds at the conclusion of the grant period (due in spring 2024).

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Question: If I am a previous grantee, can I apply again?**

Answer: Yes.

**Q: Are nonprofit organizations eligible to apply?**

A: No. Equity Fund grants are awarded only to for-profit small businesses.

**Q: I'm a queer entrepreneur in North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Iowa, but I'm not a Person of Color. Can I still apply to the Equity Fund?**

A: No. Unfortunately, grant funds for businesses within PFund's five-state service area but outside of Minnesota are restricted to queer entrepreneurs of color at this time.

**Q: The nature of my business's schedule is unpredictable and I can't guarantee I can make it to all the business development learning sessions. Can I still apply?**

A: We understand that some businesses have unique needs (for example, we have worked with several doulas in the past). All Equity Fund grantees agree to participate in a minimum of 80% of the training sessions. We understand that things happen, but request that all applicants commit to participating to the best of their ability. In some cases, trainings may be able to be made up through virtual content or office hours.

**Q: Can I make changes to my application after the deadline?**

A: No. All submissions material must be submitted in their final form by the deadline. PFund staff cannot retrieve any application materials from Submittable after that time.

**Q: My business is still in its early stages; is it still eligible to apply?**

A: Your business must have been in operation for a year and beyond the ideas phase. You can demonstrate the seriousness of your business in your application by mentioning your product, proof of concept, and markets.

**Q: My business has been operational for over a year but filed its LLC paperwork less than a year ago. Is it still eligible for an Equity Fund grant?**

A: Yes. Please include information about how long you have been in business versus how long your business has registered with the state as part of your grant application.

**Q: My business has proprietary intellectual property; how do ensure that my IP is safe while participating in the Equity Fund cohort?**

A: It's up to you how much you want to share about your business in your grant application and during cohort training sessions. The goal of the cohort is to share resources and build knowledge; this can all be done without sharing sensitive information related to your business.

**Q: I co-own a business. I am queer and BIPOC and my partner is queer and White. Which cohort should I apply for?**

A: Your team will need to consider who will be attending the business training sessions and choose a cohort accordingly. Please be explicit in your application on who from your business will be attending the virtual or in-person training sessions.



**Q: If I receive an Equity Fund grant, is the cash award considered taxable income by the IRS?**

A: Yes. All grantee recipients will receive 1099 forms detailing the amount of funds they receive and are expected to pay taxes on grant fund received. Grant applicants may want to take this into account when developing their plans on how to use grant funds.

**Q: I still have questions about the Equity Fund. Where can I get more information?**

A: Consider attending the [informational webinar PFund is holding on August 9 at noon](#). We will post a video of the webinar after its completion so people who are not able to attend in real-time can still review the content. If you still have questions, please email Chou Moua, PFund's Director of Programs, at [chou@pfundfoundation.org](mailto:chou@pfundfoundation.org).