

The Market Entry Fund

2025 MICRO-GRANTS CYCLE

APPLICATION GUIDE

Version 2.17.2025

SECTION I: BACKGROUND

The Market Entry Fund (TMEF) is a nonprofit in Minnesota that supports CPG food and beverage businesses and their founders. TMEF’s mission is to advance equity and inclusion in local food supply chains by equipping underrepresented entrepreneurs to participate equitably in food production and manufacturing. TMEF helps founders access the resources they need to thrive, including micro-financing, operational solutions, technical assistance, and connections to markets.

In alignment with its mission, TMEF’s Micro-Grants for Micro-Food Manufacturing (Micro-Grants Program) provides flexible financial support in the form of grants. One of the key objectives of the Micro-Grants Program is to bolster the financial position of emerging packaged food businesses that are owned by underrepresented founders demonstrating systemic barriers to equitable participation and opportunities in this sector. We welcome applications from all eligible businesses; however, preference will be given to those who best align with the primary objective of the program.

SECTION II: DETAILS OF THE MICRO-GRANTS PROGRAM

How much is the grant award?

In 2025, an estimated 10-15 businesses will be selected to receive micro-grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000 per grant. Each recipient’s grant amount will be based on the size of the business, as demonstrated by annual gross revenue.

What can the grant be used for, and who can apply?

Applicants can propose how they would like to use the funds and uses for the micro-grants are flexible. However, the most competitive applicants are those that are able to describe how the funds will help to:

- Alleviate or “untangle” the business from a specific challenge or systemic barrier, and

- Propel the business forward to the next level of its development – whatever that level may mean for the business - but must be well defined and described in the proposal.

Please note, grants *may not* be used to cover ongoing (fixed) costs, such as rent, mortgage, staffing, or general supplies & inventory.

TMEF welcomes applications from any business making packaged food or beverages like those found in grocery stores. As stated above, preference will be given to those who demonstrate systemic barriers to equitable participation in the manufacturing to CPG markets. Applicants are already in or have plans to enter the CPG market to sell business to business (B2B). In other words, applicants must be licensed or working actively towards food manufacturing licensing in Minnesota.

Given limited funds, we ask that previous grantees wait two years before re-applying to the Micro-Grants Program. This means that any grant recipient from 2023 and 2024 is ineligible to apply in 2025.

Each business is permitted to submit only one application. Should TMEF find multiple submissions, it will be at our discretion as to the version we accept. Applicants will not be contacted prior to decision in such a case.

How are applicants selected?

A community-based committee of individuals who have experience in small businesses, grant making, food and beverage industry, and other relevant experience will review the grant applications and help decide awards. This committee is recruited annually from diverse communities across Minnesota.

What is the grant process timeline?

Application Information Session: Tuesday, February 25

Application Opens: Tuesday, February 25

Application Closes: Monday, April 28, at 11:59PM

Application Review: May – June

Grant Decisions & Announcement: August

Grant Agreements & Disbursements: August

Preparing for Your Application

Applicants are highly encouraged to assess and know their business needs and opportunities well before applying.

The application includes short-answer questions, multiple choice selections, and narrative style questions.

Applicants will be required to sign into Google. You will receive a copy of your application after submitting.

We recommend that you carefully review the application questions in Section III first and gather the relevant information before filling out the application on Google Forms. The link to fill out an application is posted on our website.

SECTION III: 2025 APPLICATION QUESTIONS

DISCLAIMER: Please note that submitting an application does not guarantee funds to an applicant. TMEF reserves the right to cancel this program at any stage of the process. All costs incurred in applying for this opportunity are the sole responsibility of the applicant. *(Check the box: I have read the disclaimer and want to proceed with the application.)*

Part I: Business Contact

1. Business Legal Name *(short answer)*
2. Mailing Address – Number + Street *(short answer)*
3. Mailing Address – City *(short answer)*
4. Mailing Address – Zip Code *(short answer)*
5. Name of Founder(s)/Owner(s) *(short answer)*
6. Founder/Owner's Preferred Phone Number (Format: 123-456-7890.) *(short answer)*
7. Founder/Owner's Preferred Email (Note: It is okay if this email does not match the email you are using to complete this form. Here, please enter the founder/owner's preferred email for business use.) *(short answer)*

Part II: Business Information

8. EIN Number *(short answer)*
9. MDA Food License Number *(short answer)*
10. Product Category *(select from a drop-down list)*
11. Is your business woman-owned? *(yes/no)*
12. Other founder demographics *(check all that apply)*
13. Number of Employees, including founder/owner(s) *(select from a drop-down list)*
14. What is your reported gross revenue for last year? *(short answer)*
15. Using the answer you provided in Question 14, please provide a breakdown, in percentage, of the key sources of gross revenue. (For example: from sales, grants or loans, crowdfunding, government, or other sources.) *(long answer)*

Part III: Grant Request

16. How much are you asking for? (Please Note: TMEF will award no more than \$5,000 to businesses reporting gross revenue of \$250,000 or less; and no more than \$20,000 for those businesses reporting gross revenue above \$250,000. The latter will be required to provide documentation before awards are finalized.) (*short answer*)

Part IV: Grant Narrative

17. **Your Business Story.** Tell us about your business. What product(s) does your business make and why? Where are you making and selling your product and how is it going? What is the status of the business today? What is your plan or your dream for your business? Finally, what are the opportunities and challenges for you and your business in the next 1 to 2 years? (Maximum 4,000 characters, spaces included.) (*long answer*)
18. **Strategic Use of the Requested Funds.** Tell us what you would do with the grant money, if awarded. Be sure to provide a clear context for how you plan to spend the grant money, especially highlighting how the use of funds will address opportunities and challenges you identified in Question 17. (Maximum 4,000 characters, spaces included.) (*long answer*)
19. **Impact on Your Business.** How does spending the grant money the way you described above help your business break through an issue or barrier you face? (Please remember that this question is weighted 50% in the application review.) (Maximum 4,000 characters, spaces included.) (*long answer*)

Date and Signature

This application must be signed by the founder/owner of the business. By submitting this application, I confirm that all information provided is accurate and truthful to the best of my knowledge.

Submission Date:

Signature: