

The Market Entry Fund

2024 MICRO-GRANTS CYCLE

APPLICATION GUIDE

Version 2.29.2024

SECTION I: BACKGROUND ABOUT THE MARKET ENTRY AND ITS MICRO-GRANTS PROGRAM

The Market Entry (TMEF) is a nonprofit in Minnesota that supports packaged food businesses and their founders. Our core community is typically made up of small-scale producers and manufacturers of packaged foods for the CPG market, or small growers/farmers who take the farm goods and turn them into value-added consumer goods for the market.

TMEF's core mission is to enable traditionally marginalized and underrepresented entrepreneurs in this industry to thrive, by helping them access the resources and supports they need to equitably participate and reach their potential in the industry. We do so through business and technical support along with micro-grants, strategic connections, and public awareness education.

In alignment with its mission, TMEF's Micro Grants for Micro Food Manufacturing (or The Micro Grants Program) provides flexible financial support in the form of grants to diverse small-scale food manufacturers/producers in Minnesota. *The main objective of the grant program is to bolster the financial position of emerging packaged food businesses that are owned by entrepreneurs of color, women, veterans and/or other 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 objectives of the program.*

SECTION II: SPECIFICS OF THE MICRO-GRANTS PROGRAM (2024 CYCLE):

In 2024, Micro-grants of various levels will be provided to an estimated 10-15 businesses through a competitive process. The grant level will be based on the business' stage of operations, gross sales revenue, needs and opportunities. Levels may range between \$5,000 up to \$20,000 per grant.

Given limited funds, we ask that past grantees wait at least two years before re-applying to this grant program. This means that grantees from 2022 and 2023 (receiving any prior amount), are ineligible to re-apply this year.

A diverse community-based committee of individuals who have experience in small businesses, grant reviews, food and beverage industry and other relevant experiences, will review the grant applications and help decide grant awards. This is called our Grant Reviewer Committee, and they are recruited annually from diverse communities in Minnesota.

The application is a simple Google Form with short questions (often multiple-choice questions) and a few questions that require a thorough narrative from the applicant. To help the applicant prepare and gather information to complete the application on the Google Form well, we are providing this Guide with a preview of the application questions. See the end of this Guide for the Application Questions.

TIPS: We highly recommend that you print out this Application Guide, carefully review the information, and gather the relevant information and data (including your business financial information as needed) before you start working on the Google Form. We also suggest that you work on the narrative questions in Part 4 on a word.doc and then cut and paste your text into the Google Form (paying close attention to space requirements).

Submitting your application via the Google form is the preferred method. Access the Google Form here: <https://forms.gle/f6boDqSCM8qKr2mD6>. You can also find a hyperlink to the Form and additional details on our website at: <https://marketentryfund.org/micro-grants>. If you are unable to access the Form through the link noted here, please go to the website and try using the hyperlink there, before contacting us for tech support.

Each applicant, each business, is permitted to submit **only one application**. Should TMEF find duplicates or multiple submissions, it will be at our discretion as to the version to accept and make part of the grant review process. Applicants will not be contacted prior to decision in such a case. Submit only one! The one you want.

If you have questions about the application process or have technical issues with the Google Form, please contact Roberta Casado by email at roberta.casado@marketentryfund.org, **well in advance of the due date, on May 2, 2024.**

SECTION III: KEY DATES FOR THE 2024 CYCLE

Application Information Session: March 1, 2024

Application Opens: March 1, 2024

Application Closes: May 2, 2024

Application Review: May – July 2024

Grant Decisions & Announcement: August 2024

Grant Agreements & Disbursements: September 2024

SECTION IV: PREVIEW OF THE APPLICATION QUESTIONS (In the Google Application Form)

All questions in the application must be completed. Such questions are typically marked with an (*). Incomplete response to a question with an (*) will not allow you to proceed to the rest of the application. Finally, the Google Form will save your work/progress until you submit it. It should also allow you go back to a previous question if you need to go back to edit your response. But as with all technology, it is best to draft your responses (especially narrative/longer responses) in another file and save it, to ensure you have a copy.

The following is a preview of the application questions in the Google form. We **highly recommend:** **1)** pre-reading these questions carefully, **2)** gather the information you need, and **3)** pre-draft your responses to *Part 4 – Business Narrative* before you start working in the Google Form. Part 4 asks for strategic information and narratives about the business and has word/space requirements.

Finally, note that the actual language of each question outlined below may vary slightly once you are in the Google Form, but the objective of the question is the same, and the question in the Google Form is the one you should respond to). **The Google Application Form starts here**

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER:

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

ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONS (YES | NO)

QUESTION 1: Is your business licensed in the state of Minnesota? *

QUESTION 2: Does your MN business license allow you to make a packaged food or beverage product that can be sold by other businesses (such as a grocery store)?*

QUESTION 3: Does your business identify as a) Black, Indigenous, or People of Color - owned; b) women-owned; and/or c) owned by an individual from a marginalized or underrepresented community/group? *

PART 1 - BUSINESS INFORMATION

1. Business Legal Name:*

2. EIN Number:*

3. Type of Business:*

4. MDA Food License Number:*

5. Business Website:*

6. Upload business logo here (optional)

7. Business Address where mail can be received. Include street number, city, state, and zip code.*

8. County:*(choose from a drop-down list)

9. Name of Founder/Owner *

10. Contact Phone Number:*

11. Contact Email:*

12. Basic Demographics of Owner(s): Please select all that best apply to you and your business: (The next question allows you to elaborate if you need to) *(choose from a drop-down list)

13. Please use this space to briefly elaborate on the ownership demographics for the business.

14. Number of Employees: *(choose from a drop-down list)

15. Product Category: *(choose from a drop-down list)

PART 2 - BUSINESS REVENUE

16. Is your business annual gross revenue \$250,000 or less? * Yes | No

(Note for Applicants): A “YES” answer to #16 will allow you to proceed to Part 3 (#18) and subsequent questions. A “NO” answer to #16, will take you to a few more questions first, (**starting with Question #17**), which is targeted to applicants with an annual gross revenue of \$251,000 or more (but not exceeding \$1 million). These applicants will need to **submit financial documentation supporting their annual revenue level and the requested grant amount** – which may be higher than businesses answering “yes” to #16. Due to limited funds, fewer applicants will be selected for this higher level of grant amount.

PART 3 - SOURCES OF REVENUE – IMPORTANT: Responses to 18.a through 18.f must add up to 100%. Your answer must be in percentage.

18. a) What percentage of your total gross revenue is from SALES? *

18. b) What percentage of your total gross revenue is from CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS? *

18. c) What percentage of your total gross revenue is from FRIENDS & FAMILIES? *

18. d) What percentage of your total gross revenue is from YOUR OWN FUNDS/INVESTMENTS? *

18. e) What percentage of your total gross revenue is from GOVERNMENT FUNDS? *

18. f) What OTHER SOURCES of funds do you receive (that is not listed in 18a-18e above) *

PART 4 - BUSINESS NARRATIVE

19. Your business story: Tell us about your business. Important information includes what product(s) your business makes, and why. What is your plan or your dream for the business? What is the status of the business today? Where are you making and selling the product(s) and how is it going? What has been your overall business experience - clearly describing the opportunities and challenges for you and your business (min. 1000 characters). *

20. 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, and how that aligns with the opportunities and challenges you have had or will have. (min. 1000 characters).*

21. Breakthrough/Impact for the Business: How does spending the grant money the way you described in #20 help your business break through an issue/barrier that you are facing in your business? (min. 1000 characters).*

DATE AND SIGNATURE (then SUBMIT)

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 (Type your name)*