



## MEDIA ADVISORY

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### **Center and Partners Announce Vanguard Accelerator Investments to Support 13 Black, Indigenous, and Latina Women-Owned Businesses in Twin Cities at Summit, June 22**

**June 20 (St. Paul, Minn.)** – The Center for Economic Inclusion (Center), in partnership with Founders First CDC and NEOO Partners, Inc., will announce 13 finalists of its annual Vanguard Accelerator (Accelerator) and Vanguard Fund to invest in Black- and Indigenous-owned businesses and Latina women-owned businesses based in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region. The announcement will take place at a press conference held during the Center's 2023 Powering Inclusion Summit on June 22.

This is the Accelerator's second round in a multi-year collaboration to increase the number of businesses owned by Black, Indigenous, and Latine people with annual earnings over \$1 million, and capacity for scaleable job creation through investments in the capital, connections, and knowledge so many business owners need for growth. The Accelerator also supports corporations and government agencies in building capacity for diverse, racially inclusive and responsive supply chains.

To qualify, the founder must be a Black, Indigenous, or Latina woman business owner with an active business in a targeted growth B2B sector, based in the Twin Cities, have annual revenues between \$75,000 and \$3 million, employ at least three full-time employees, and be in business a minimum of three years.

- **What:** Press conference announcing Vanguard Accelerator awards to invest in Black, Indigenous, and Latina women-owned businesses based in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region
- **Date/Time:** Thursday, June 22, 9:00-9:20 a.m. (Summit runs 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. + Networking Mixer, 4:30-6 p.m.)
- **Where:** During the Center for Economic Inclusion's [2023 Powering Inclusion Summit](#), *Gaps to Opportunity: Building Legacy Wealth in Black and Brown Communities*
- **Location:** Main stage, Grand Ballroom (Level 3), Hilton Minneapolis, 1001 Marquette Ave
- **Speakers (in order of appearance):**
  - Shaylon Scott, Executive Director, Founders First CDC
  - Deputy Commissioner Kevin McKinnon, MN DEED
  - Christina Berry, Senior Economic Development Advisor and Deep South Lead, NEOO Partners, Inc.
  - Tawanna A. Black, Founder and CEO, Center for Economic Inclusion
- **Media Interviews:** Speakers available after Opening Plenary ends at 9:30 a.m.
- **Summit features:**
  - Live press conference announcing Vanguard Accelerator finalists

- Announcement of the Center's *2023 Racial Equity Dividends Index Results & Report Distribution*
- Keynote interview featuring Dr. Pamela Jolly, author and business growth strategist, with Tawanna A. Black, Center founder and CEO, about the path to building legacy wealth in Black communities
- 40+ regional, state, national speakers
- 12 Activator Labs
- Business Marketplace featuring 12 Black and Latina vendors
- Networking mixer (post-Summit) with DJ, cash bar, hors d'oeuvres

**2023**

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### **Center for Economic Inclusion**

The Center for Economic Inclusion, founded in 2017 and headquartered in Saint Paul, Minn., is the nation's first organization dedicated exclusively to equipping public and private sector employers and policymakers to close racial employment, income and wealth gaps and catalyze inclusive economic growth. The Center is a think-and-do tank, an accelerator responsible for producing the business and government executives, and Black, Indigenous, Asian, and Latine business owners who will transform regional economies into thriving, racially equitable ecosystems for everyone. The Center offers research, education, advocacy, job creation, and transformation consultancy services in services of its mission to educate, equip and influence 20,000 leaders, employers, and policymakers to take and scale anti-racist actions to ensure that 3 million people experience a racially just, inclusive, and economically vibrant economy by 2028. Learn more: <https://www.centerforeconomicinclusion.org/>

### **Vanguard Accelerator and Vanguard Fund**

The Center for Economic Inclusion's Vanguard Accelerator and Vanguard Fund are fueled by a multi-sector collaboration to maximize wealth-building opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and Latina-owned businesses in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region. Vanguard offers bank-ready businesses in high-growth industries proven tools and resources to scale, while also building racially inclusive and equitable corporate and government supply chains. The Vanguard Accelerator and Fund complement the diverse array of business development programs for start-ups, by intentionally arming Black and Brown business owners with the tools, financial and human capital necessary to scale those businesses and become job creators and wealth builders, by competing for and securing corporate and government contracts for revenue growth. Learn more: <https://www.centerforeconomicinclusion.org/accelerator-grant-application>

### **Founders First CDC**

Founders First CDC is a nonprofit 501c3 that was founded in 2015 and has received significant support from the regional community reinvestment banks to empower diverse founder-led, revenue-generating small businesses through three primary programs: (1) Founders Challenge; (2) Founders Bootcamp; and (3) Founders FastPath. By building recurring revenues, tech enablement, and essential solution focus, Founders First is a catalyst for positive change for underserved entrepreneurs and founders to

become leading employers in their communities. Since launching, Founders First CDC has awarded more than \$620,000 to minority and underserved business owners throughout the United States, focusing on Texas, Chicago, Southern California, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey regions. Through this partnership, Founders First CDC has officially expanded its impact offering to Minneapolis-St. Paul. Learn more: [www.foundersfirstcdc.org](http://www.foundersfirstcdc.org).

**NEOO Partners, Inc.**

NEOO Partners is a creative urban planning, place-making, and real estate consulting firm for small to medium-sized businesses, non-profit organizations, and local units of government. Clients benefit from the process of creating a shared vision with the help of the firm that is grounded in culturally competent solutions and human-centric experiences. NEOO leverages applied empathy to deliver thoughtful yet people-focused solutions for clients by cultivating sustainable relationships in the community and layering quantitative data with the qualitative experiences of residents, businesses, and stakeholder organizations. Learn more: <https://www.neoopartners.com/>.