



## **NEW CILAR GRANT PROGRAM OFFERS FUNDING FOR CANADIAN BLACK-LED BUSINESSES**

**(TORONTO, ON – July 23rd, 2021)** The Coalition of Innovation Leaders Against Racism (CILAR) has developed a Grant program for Black-led businesses, funded by Facebook Canada, in partnership with [Black Opportunity Fund](#) and [Pitch Better](#).

The grant seeks to establish a sustainable pathway to support economic and social empowerment for Black-led businesses in Canada. The program will provide support ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000 per business, with the goal to provide capital resources for as many Black-led businesses as possible.

In a recent national survey of over 300 Black Canadian entrepreneurs by the African Canadian Senate Group, the top challenge was access to funding, financing, starting capital and sales. 75% of Black entrepreneurs say that if they needed to find \$10,000 to support their business, it would be difficult for them to do so. COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted the Black business community and CILAR recognizes the importance of responding to urgent community needs while taking a long-term approach in building pathways to greater business sustainability.

With funding provided by Facebook Canada, CILAR has chosen to work with 'Pitch Better' and 'Black Opportunity Fund' to support this grant program for small-to-medium businesses and entrepreneurs. The collaboration was formed with 'Pitch Better' to address data gaps for Black-led/Black-serving organizations in Canada. Since 2019, Pitch Better has offered support to over 700 Canadian companies and helped almost 10% of the Black community access funding.

"As a member of the black community, I know from personal experience how it feels to be overlooked and underestimated. The power of CILAR is through our network of companies. We are thrilled to see Facebook take action to fund this grant program and CILAR will unveil a few new initiatives that deliver on our vision for full participation in the innovation sector. Our five priority areas are youth development, job opportunities, access to capital, leadership and, inclusive innovation/technology. Each program will be launched thoughtfully with community partners as we remain laser-focused on delivering positive change for today, and for future generations," said Claudette McGowan, CILAR Chair.

CILAR acknowledges funding challenges encountered by the Black community and aims to ensure the application process is simple, transparent and straightforward.

"We are delighted to join this partnership with these outstanding organizations. Since the inception of Pitch Better, we have prioritized scaling and growing underbanked businesses through data and innovative programs that aim to build. To be able to provide funding to Black entrepreneurs during the aftermath of a pandemic will be game changing. We thank CILAR and Facebook Canada for their consistent leadership and vision," remarked Amoye Henry, Co-Founder, Pitch Better Inc.

“This is a terrific and cohesive partnership of organizations that are coming together to support Black entrepreneurship. We’re pleased to play a role in this exciting CILAR grant program and grateful to Facebook Canada for its funding. Where Black-led investment has occurred, exceptional results have been achieved,” says Craig Wellington, Executive Director, Black Opportunity Fund.

The grant program for Black-led businesses is one of many projects in the works that CILAR, its members and co-creators are working on together to build inclusive opportunities.

**To apply for the CILAR Grant Program, visit [cilar.ca/programs/black-led-business-grants](http://cilar.ca/programs/black-led-business-grants) and review the following criteria:**

- Be an organization that is Black-led. The majority of owners and/or leadership team identify as Black
- Be a Canadian business with a valid business registration number
- Share how COVID has impacted the business
- Provide an overview of how funds will be used to help sustain the business through the pandemic (e.g., technology support, certifications, skilling, digitizing, etc.)
- Submit a full and accurate application

The CILAR grant program launches today, July 23, 2021 with applications due by August 20, 2021.

Join our community on social media [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#). ###

### **About the Coalition of Innovation Leaders Against Racism (CILAR)**

CILAR is a diverse group of Canadian leaders committed to creating equitable pathways for the Black community, Indigenous peoples and people of colour. In doing so, CILAR aims to help end systemic racism and other barriers to participation using an inclusive coalition model. The five areas of focus include youth development, job opportunities, access to capital, leadership and, inclusive innovation/technology. Learn more at [cilar.ca](http://cilar.ca).

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### **About Pitch Better**

Pitch Better Canada is a market research and capacity-building firm that works to bridge the gap between diverse women led start-ups and their means to acquiring capital through grants and investments.

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**About Black Opportunity Fund (BOF)**

In 2020, a diverse team of Black Canadians, from around the country, came together to create a new way to serve and empower Black communities. They established the Black Opportunity Fund (BOF) – with an ambitious goal of raising \$1.5 billion in 10 years – to fund Black-led initiatives.

Black Opportunity Fund will be a catalyst to dismantle anti-Black racism by supporting the cultural, social, economic and political changes required to advance diversity and inclusion at all levels in Canada's institutions, governments, and businesses.

Black Opportunity Fund is a new approach, leveraging partnerships between government, Black communities, corporations, philanthropic foundations and individuals to drive a historic transformation of Canada's Black communities.

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