

Final Report | January 2023

Philadelphia Media Founders Exchange

Investing in BIPOC Media Founders
and the Philadelphia News Ecosystem



Funding Partners

The Lenfest Institute for Journalism
Independence Public Media Foundation
Knight-Lenfest Local News Transformation Fund



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Executive Summary

From March to July 2022, the inaugural Philadelphia Media Founders Exchange (PMFE) provided intensive training, a community of practice, one-on-one coaching, and multiple rounds of funding to a group of 11 Black, indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) media entrepreneurs. The program, funded by The Lenfest Institute for Journalism, the Knight-Lenfest Local News Transformation Fund, and Independence Public Media Foundation, was designed to support BIPOC media founders whose work empowers communities to tell their own stories, and to equip these founders with resources to create more sustainable revenue models for their businesses. By bringing together this range of diverse entrepreneurs, the hope for the program was to build community, assess where there is energy for future opportunities, and to begin to experiment with some catalytic solutions that will benefit the entrepreneurs and Philadelphia's news media ecosystem as a whole. We are grateful for the input of multiple stakeholder groups during this year-long experience: our interviewees, design workshop attendees, cohort applicants and participants, application reviewers, instructors, coaches, investors, operators, and ecosystem players who contributed to the success of this inaugural year.

This report only summarizes the process of designing PMFE and early results from the program. The outcomes of the program will evolve over the coming months and years as organizations and entrepreneurs implement the personal and business goals identified over the course of the program, further demonstrating clarity in their business models.

PMFE is a model and inspiration for funders, entrepreneurs, and communities to come together to address critical information gaps in BIPOC communities across the U.S. and beyond. This work is a local expression of a growing national and international effort to explore alternative entrepreneurial communities, business models, financing instruments, and practices that heal, repair, and restore our communities, rather than extract from, disrupt, and damage them.

Zebras Unite Co-Op (ZU) served as the consulting partner to co-design, plan, and implement PMFE's first iteration. ZU's core principles and practices are rooted in the legacy of cooperative movements across the globe, relying on collaboration and emergent processes to address challenges and generate solutions. This approach was valuable, urgent and necessary, as it was designed and implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic which has disproportionately impacted communities of color. This work occurred in partnership with PMFE's core funders, as well as BIPOC media entrepreneurs from the Philadelphia news and information ecosystem, to co-create the goals and decision-making processes that guided the cohort experience. The resulting collaborative program provided critical business training led by [Black & Brown Founders](#), funding, and a community of practice among the PMFE entrepreneurs.

To support the cohort in developing critical business skills, PMFE helped the entrepreneurs reorient their relationship with revenue generation, budgeting, identifying customers, and planning for long-term sustainability. As feedback from participants demonstrated, the program also supported a change in perspective about how these entrepreneurs view themselves in relation to their business, encouraging them to move to a mindset that ensured they were drawing a salary, learning to delegate by adding team members, and questioning their assumptions. This wisdom was gleaned in the community. By design, the program centered the learnings and wisdom of cohort members and encouraged collaboration across the cohort.

Background

Background

In November 2020, The Lenfest Institute for Journalism hosted BEYOND: Reimagining Philadelphia Journalism, a summit featuring journalists of color and community members speaking about the potential and power of the current social and historical moment to transform journalism. BEYOND was the first of its kind in Philadelphia, in recent years, but the work to address inequities in journalism and correct harm is built upon the shoulders of journalists like [Acel Moore](#), [E. Steven Collins](#), [Mumia Abu Jamal](#), [Chuck Stone](#), [Charlayne Hunter-Gault](#) and others who worked in our local news ecosystem who have been asking for this kind of change for decades. BEYOND was a local expression of a national and international trend sweeping our culture, one that seeks alternative business models, financing instruments, and practices that heal, repair, and restore our communities rather than extract from, disrupt, and damage them.

The message from Philadelphia’s active and engaged media makers was resoundingly clear: we must build the media of the future together, from a place of collaboration, cooperation, and mutualism.

PMFE was born out of this collective desire. The program is rooted in the commitment of The Lenfest Institute and the Knight-Lenfest Local News Transformation Fund to create a more sustainable future for journalism and to make resources more accessible to BIPOC media leaders who have earned the trust of their communities. Based on that commitment, the funders developed the following objectives to guide the co-creation and development of the program:

ASSESSING the information needs of Philadelphia’s diverse communities

EMPOWERING communities to tell their own stories

SUPPORTING the establishment of BIPOC-owned and operated media organizations to craft and share the narrative of underrepresented communities through the Philadelphia media ecosystem

SUPPORTING the diversification of information delivery systems

IDENTIFYING AND SUPPORTING innovative and sustainable revenue models and structures that help close wealth gaps (including, but not limited to, nonprofits, for-profits, and shared ownership structures like collectives and co-ops)

The Funders were motivated by the question: How might we create a more sustainable and equitable news and information ecosystem for Philadelphia so communities may thrive?

These objectives informed a collaborative community co-design process, outlined in the Programmatic Theory of Change, that guided the format, structure, and delivery of PMFE’s first iteration.

The Entrepreneurs

Sofiya Abena Ballin

Jean-Pierre Brice

Alex Lewis

Joshua Meekins

Indah Nuritasari

Sheila Quintana Aguilar

Shameka Sawyer

Lauren Settles

Kaia Niambi Shivers

Kristal Sotomayor

Anis Taylor

The Entrepreneurs

Eleven entrepreneurs completed the inaugural PMFE cohort. Representing a range of platforms, including video, radio, podcasting, film and online journalism, these eleven entrepreneurs were selected from over fifty applications. Cohort members possessed expertise in different areas, from technical skills to business development, and were able to learn from one another and share lessons learned from their respective entrepreneurial journeys. For continuity, cohort participants were asked to ensure at least one person from their business participated in the full duration of the program; PMFE also invited additional team members and colleagues from the selected media businesses to participate in programming, training, and events.



Sofiya Abena Ballin

[Black History Untold](#)

Sofiya is a Caribbean-American and award-winning journalist and producer who has written for The Philadelphia Inquirer, Huffington Post, The Washington Post, Essence, FADER and produced for The New York Times, the Brooklyn Nets, ACLU, and Aerie. She is also the creator of the award-winning Black History Untold Project, an identity series that explores the importance of a comprehensive Black history through powerful and personal interviews.



Jean-Pierre Brice

[CMP Radio](#)

Jean-Pierre, aka Uncle P, began his radio career in 2016, working with PQRadio1 and Purple Queen, joining the No Filter show with No Q Tommy and DJ Chuck B, and launching the podcast Revolutionary Minds. With partners Joelle and Chuck B, he launched CMPRadio.net in 2017 to bring information to the Chester community, cultivate mature positivity, and give a voice to the voiceless.



Alex Lewis

[Rowhome Productions](#)

Alex Lewis is an audio storyteller and musician who has produced award-winning audio documentaries for NPR, BBC Radio 4, and many other radio stations and podcast companies. He is also the co-founder of Rowhome Productions, an audio production agency that specializes in making podcasts, radio documentaries, audio tours, and other narrative audio projects.



Joshua Meekins

[Mike Jay Films](#)

Joshua Meekins is a creator, producer, and storyteller across multiple platforms whose work has earned him over 2 million YouTube views and an appearance in a Cannes Film Festival Short Film Selection. He has created a podcast platform for upcoming creators titled “Disruptors in the Culture,” and through Mike Jay Films, he continues to produce holistic narratives, centered on people of color, that advance social change and tell stories that matter.



Indah Nuritasari

Indonesian Lantern

Indah Nuritasari has worked for more than thirty years as a journalist in Indonesia, Germany, and the United States. She has also served as an Asset Building and Savings Program Manager for Women's Opportunities Resource Center (WORC) and a Commercial Loan and Technical Assistance Officer for the Cooperative Business Assistance Corporation. As CEO of Indonesian Lantern, she provides a platform for the Indonesian community to find trusted information about Indonesian news, culture, and business, and to have a voice in American media.



Sheila Quintana Aguilar

Sheila Quintana Aguilar

Sheila Quintana Aguilar is an undocumented mother and artist with a decade of community and political organizing experience at the intersection of migration, criminalization, and health. She works with local, statewide, and national non-profit and social movement organizations and campaigns developing participatory, intersectional narrative and communication strategy for social change. She is an inaugural Leeway x IPMF Media Artist + Activist in Residence, a VONA writers workshop alumna, and a recipient of the Artist Leadership Award by the Center for Cultural Power.



PMFE entrepreneurs participate in a connection exercise with members of WHY's N.I.C.E. Photo by Zamani Feelings



Shameka Sawyer

[5 Shorts Project](#)

Shameka Sawyer is an award-winning producer and champion for diversity, equity, and inclusion and an experienced director of photography, camera operator, and video editor. She is the Founder of the 5 Shorts Project, one of the few film and video production companies in Philadelphia owned and operated by an African-American woman, and has developed content a range of clients, including the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), NAACP Philadelphia Chapter, Straight Ahead Organization, North Broad Street Renaissance, and WHY.



Lauren Settles

[We Talk Weekly](#)

Lauren Settles holds a B.A., M.B.A, and is a current Master of Journalism student at Temple University Klein College of Media and Communication and served on Philadelphia Community Access Media (PhillyCAM) Board of Directors from 2015-2021, where she assisted in creating WPPM 106.5 FM. As co-host of We Talk Weekly, Lauren amplifies Black voices through objective storytelling that highlights contrasting positive Black narratives, while creating growth and opportunities for marginalized communities of color.



Kaia Niambi Shivers

[Ark Republic](#)

Kaia Niambi Shivers is a media scholar, artist, and professor with nearly three decades of experience in media. She is the founder and editor-in-chief of Ark Republic, a member-funded, advertisement-and-cookie free, digital outlet using multimedia to provide rich and robust stories, features, news and thoughts. As part of a collective, Ark Republic's journalists, scholars, artists, and activists offer a range of media services and examine the world through innovative, experimental storytelling techniques.



Kristal Sotomayor

[Sotomayor Productions](#)

Kristal Sotomayor (they/she) is a bilingual Latinx journalist, filmmaker, and festival programmer whose production company, Sotomayor Productions, works at the intersection of investigative journalism and documentary filmmaking to advance the portrayals of Latinx communities. They also serve as the Awards Competition Manager for the International Documentary Association (IDA) and Programming Director for the Philadelphia Latino Film Festival (PHLAFF).



Anis Taylor

[Higher Than 7](#)

Anis Taylor aka AT SoundZ, is a screenwriter, director, and producer of music, films, and TV. He is also the CEO and co-founder of Higher Than 7, a subscription streaming platform that provides the Philadelphia community and beyond with exclusive access to engaging productions from a variety of content creators focused on music, movies, shows, sports, radio, and live events.

Cohort Demographics & Business Information

During the application process, cohort participants provided demographic information about themselves as founders, as well as key information about their businesses. While the program was small, these data reveal a substantial degree of diversity within the inaugural cohort, both demographically and in relation to their businesses.

Of the 11 cohort participants who completed the program, seven identified as Black or African-American, two identified as Asian or Asian-American, and two identified as Hispanic or Latinx, with one of those participants also identifying as Indigenous.

Ten participants provided information about their age, and there was a considerable range of ages within the cohort. Three entrepreneurs were in their 20s, two were in their 30s, four were in their 40s, and one was in their 50s. Regardless of age, most participants were still early-stage entrepreneurs. While two participants had been in business for six years or more, seven had been in business for four to five years while the remaining two had been in business for only one to two years.

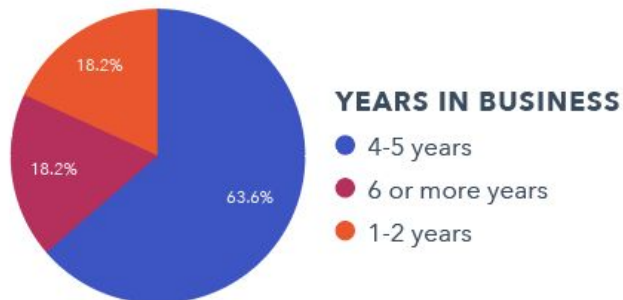
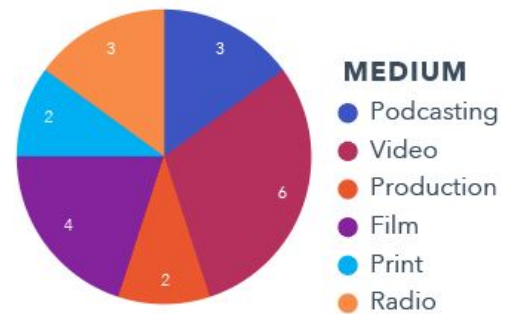
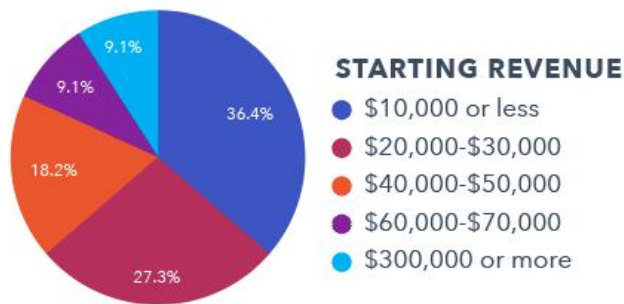
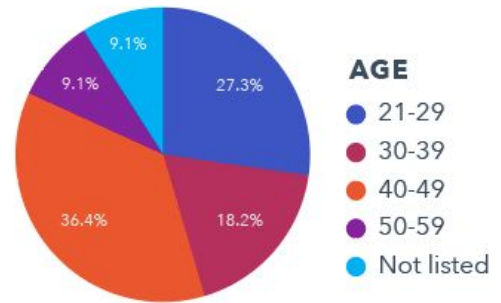
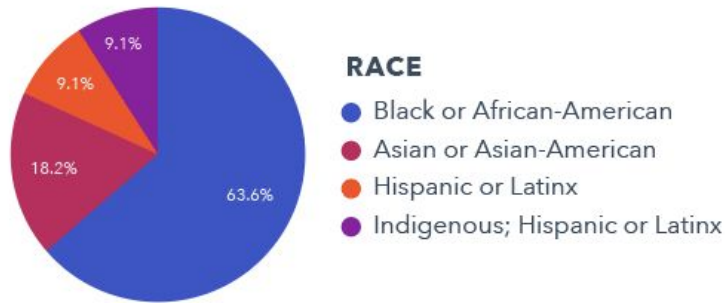
In keeping with the relatively early stage of business most of the entrepreneurs were in, the majority reported revenue under \$100,000 per year. Four businesses reported an annual revenue of \$10,000 or less, three businesses between \$20,000 and \$30,000, two between \$40,000 and \$50,000, one between \$60,000 and \$70,000, with one outlier business reporting an annual revenue over \$300,000.

Finally, many of the entrepreneurs run businesses that use multiple forms of media to deliver content, news, and information. Six participants work in video, four in film, three in radio, three in podcasting, and two in print. Two cohort participants also reported providing production services through their businesses.



PMFE and WHY's N.I.C.E. at a finale celebration for both projects. Photo by Zamani Feelings

Cohort Demographics



¹ Please note that these figures come from the initial applications to participate in the PMFE program. Cohort members were also asked to report their starting revenue in the final survey. The cohort member who reported a starting revenue over \$300,000 in their application indicated a starting revenue over \$250,000 in the final survey, a figure represented in later charts in this report.

Cohort Design and Experience

Program Design & Components

- Community Catalyst
- Programmatic Theory of Change and Five Pillars

Cohort Design and Experience

Informed by a mandate to perceive the challenges and opportunities in the ecosystem as a catalyst for a broader shift in funder mindset, the program staff at The Lenfest Institute and the Knight-Lenfest Local News Transformation Fund, comprised of seasoned BIPOC philanthropic, entrepreneurship, and journalism leaders, crafted a request for proposals for a facilitators to work with them to design a program that supported philanthropic experimentation and encouraged the exploration of new revenue and ownership models for equitable media organizations. That turned into the Philadelphia Media Founders Exchange, and by initiating the PMFE program, The Lenfest Institute, the Knight-Lenfest Fund, and The Independence Public Media Foundation sought to answer a key question: How might we create a more sustainable and equitable news and information ecosystem for Philadelphia so communities may thrive?

In considering the design for the cohort experience, the project team referenced [several reports](#), including: [Media 2070: An Invitation to Dream Up Media Reparations](#), a 100 page essay examining the history of anti-Black harm in the U.S. media system and a 2020 report titled “[Investing in Equitable News and Media Projects](#)” by Transform Finance and the Ford Foundation. The report captured two distinct problems media entrepreneurs face when seeking financial investments and support: 1) the absence of a proven and promising revenue model; and 2) a lack of mutually beneficial deal structures. These needs were also underscored by the key learnings and takeaways from our Phase I listening report (see Appendix).

Together, they designed PMFE, a cohort experience that ran from March 2022 - July 2022. Our Phase I listening report outlined practical steps and key opportunities for this cohort, which are listed below.

PRACTICAL STEPS Mentorship, technical support, and career pipelines for media makers that are responsive to their needs at multiple stages of professional and business development

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

- Employing a more flexible and expansive definition of media-entrepreneurs for PMFE
- Experimenting with ways of funding, including following a process that allows for more input and shared power
- Focusing on funding experimentation in both product and business models
- Considering how to engage newsrooms and other funders who have a responsibility for addressing systemic barriers they perpetuate

Bearing in mind these needs and opportunities, the program was designed to advance this theory of change: providing media makers with technical support, mentorship and connections to media makers and funders that could demystify revenue generation and help cohort members advance their business goals and their own professional development.

Program Design & Components

PMFE demonstrates the importance of co-designing with the community, both to inform programming and the allocation of grant funding. The listening report gave the project team clear direction, and continued work with the cohort highlighted specific needs and challenges that founders were looking to address. Key issues for cohort members included:

CREATING business plans and understanding how to earn revenue

LEARNING how to approach sponsors and funders

STAFFING up their organizations

INVESTING in infrastructure which leads to sustainability

In addition to business training, the application process and cohort experience revealed that participants were most most interested in support on:

GUIDANCE on strategy and implementation

VALIDATION from people in same industry who understand their challenges

LONG-TERM planning, including processes and workflows

SUPPORT and encouragement on prioritization and reclaiming their time as business owners



COMMUNITY CATALYST

A key component of the PMFE project was the Community Catalyst role, held by Jos Duncan Asé of Love Now Media, who was the on-the-ground presence to lead aspects of the initiative, including needfinding, culture building, program design, and execution. As the role, cohort, and our partnership evolved, Jos brought unparalleled insight, lived experience, and expertise as a media maker in her own right. She elevated the project in three core ways:



TRUST AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

through ecosystem check-ins, sharing opportunities with the cohort, and connecting the dots between members and the broader community. There were also needs around conflict resolution and journalism ethics



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND CROSS-SECTOR "TRANSLATION"

between funders, movement builders, experimental entrepreneurs and industry leaders both in and outside of media



STRATEGIC ADVICE AND EXPERTISE

by observing the needs, capabilities and skill building gaps of the cohort, marrying both experience and mentorship, and designing key components of the program as opportunities arose

By the program implementation phase, Jos had assumed strong, effective, and influential leadership of the program. The Community Catalyst role proved itself to be not only vital to the success of the program, but a pathway to significant partnership, skillbuilding and relational connection, building a strong, constellated network of participants and stakeholders.



PROGRAMMATIC THEORY OF CHANGE

This condensed theory of change was based on the programming elements within the scope of the four phases of work submitted in the consulting proposal.

PILLAR	ACTIVITIES	INPUTS	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES
Listening and Discovery	Listening sessions with community stakeholders Co-design Convening	Facilitators, the community, funders, presenters, vision coaches, entrepreneurs	Plans and programs based on BIPOC media entrepreneurship ecosystems expressed hopes needs Listening Report	The BIPOC media entrepreneurship ecosystem is engaged and aware of the intent to support them. Documentation of needs, defined success factors, framework for program design
Cohort Individual Grant Funding	Program design Cohort selection Payments disbursed	Application Funds (\$120K for 12 \$10K grants)	Selected entrepreneurs for the cohort Disbursement of funds	The cohort performs tasks, implements ideas to strengthen or build their business
Educational	Bi-weekly sessions led by Black & Brown Founders Bi-weekly sessions with experts and speakers to offer practical tools, tips, practices Coaching sessions	Digital access to BB Founders curriculum Speakers, mentors, and teachers who can present or teach topics requested by the cohort	Knowledge applicable to strengthening and developing businesses Grantee learning reports/focus groups on progress	The cohort acquires business knowledge to support the development and sustainability of their businesses
Follow-On Funding	Follow-on funding process design Application review and approval by the cohort Distribution of follow-on funds	Follow-on funding application Inquiries related to metrics for the use of follow-on funds Funders follow-on funding disbursement process	Funding applied to growth and sustainability projects Data points related to impact of follow-on funds	The cohort gains experience in evaluating peer proposals and approving funds for their peers The cohort implements learnings and ideas to grow and sustain their business
Momentum Collective	Showcase of BIPOC Businesses Funder & ecosystem engagement and fundraising Seed work for long term sustainability Press & visibility	ZU's network of funders, ecosystem builders Lenfest & K-L's network of funders and stakeholders Fundraising targets Cohort members prepared to present	Additional funds for distribution to the cohort's businesses Increased knowledge of the cohort member's businesses and goals Building connections and collaborations with each other	The cohort has access to additional funds, a network of supporters. The cohort's work is more visible to the ecosystem.



PILLAR 1: Community Co-Design Process

To support the design and implementation of a program rooted in collective expertise from across the Philadelphia news and information ecosystem, Zebras Unite led and facilitated several activities in December 2021 that involved media leaders in myriad ways:

Diagnostic listening sessions with 26 media entrepreneurs, funders, and ecosystem leaders

A two-day convening and program co-design session with media entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs working inside existing newsrooms

A collaborative first-round application review process with a committee comprised of members of the funding and consulting teams and non-applicant media leaders in Philadelphia

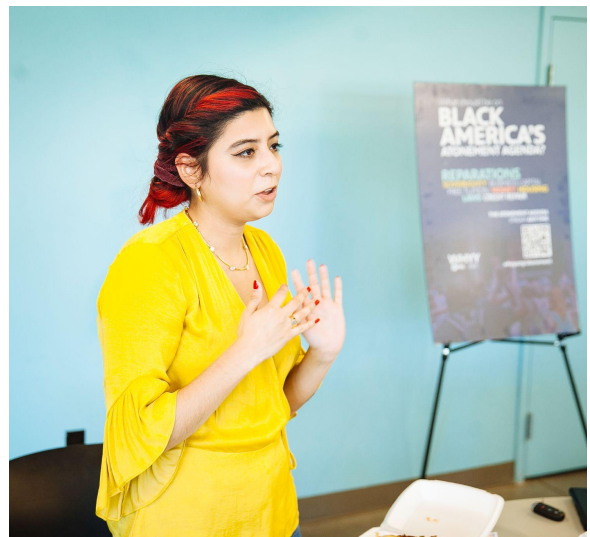
Finalist interviews with one representative each from the funding team and the consulting team

These steps allowed the project team to be proactive in designing PMFE while also remaining responsive to community input and ideation. This process contributed to an overall sense of engagement and enthusiasm in the BIPOC media entrepreneurship media ecosystem. The documentation of needs and defined success factors informed the framework for program design.



PILLAR 2: Core Grant Funding

PMFE offered every cohort member core grant funding for their participation in the program. This funding was seen as an infusion of capital into a sample of the media ecosystem. Each participant received \$10,000 for stabilization and growth of their businesses. The project team was sensitive to the immediate needs of the entrepreneurs and The Lenfest Institute disbursed \$5,000 to each entrepreneur upon acceptance to the program to support and sustain their participation. To incentivize program participation and completion, the remaining \$5,000 was disbursed to each entrepreneur after successful completion of the program.



Kristal Sotomayor of PMFE sharing updates about Sotomayor Productions.



PILLAR 3: Educational Curriculum

The educational curriculum had three main components designed to overlap and compliment each other:



Black & Brown Founders' Bootstrapping Bootcamp, a digital, self-paced course, with complementary live sessions delivered via Zoom by Deldelp Medina, Black & Brown Founders' executive director



Additional live sessions via Zoom with guest speakers from across the news, media, and funding ecosystems



One-on-one touchpoints with individual coaches to support the entrepreneurs in implementing their learnings into their businesses

BBF Bootstrapping Bootcamp

The Bootstrapping Bootcamp is a 10-week self-paced online course. The goal of integrating this course was to give cohort members a strong foundation in entrepreneurial best practices and the support to help manage and run their businesses. The cohort members completed, on average, 71% of the program.

PMFE provided a test case for the Bootcamp, with the online curriculum embedded in a broader educational framework that included coaching, co-working, live speaker sessions, and funding. Cohort members were given free access to the Bootcamp and milestones from the online curriculum were tied to the program design of PMFE.

Medina led five interactive sessions on the topics introduced in the Bootcamp and hosted discussions with the founders about how the learnings applied to their own work. These live sessions were held on the First Fridays of the month and covered:

Self-Assessment & Goal Setting (two sessions)

Understanding Your Market & Customer

Business Model, Monetization & Funding Strategy

Prototyping, Branding, Marketing, Sales & Launch

Feedback from the cohort emphasized how helpful it was to have the monthly sessions with Medina, both from an accountability perspective and to apply the learnings directly to their own work. From a personal perspective, the BBF curriculum helped founders understand how they are a valuable resource for their own businesses, which led to founders paying themselves, being more mindful of overbooking themselves, and looking to delegate more tasks to others.

Live Learning Speaker Sessions

Live learning sessions included programming connected to the Bootcamp outlined above, as well as additional learning and collaborative sessions. The goal of these live Zoom sessions was to introduce the cohort to founders and entrepreneurs they could learn from, to inspire them with new ideas, and to further connect them as a cohort by providing shared learning experiences.

The speaker sessions invited media entrepreneurs, ecosystem builders, and philanthropists to share tools, tips for success, challenges, and solutions based on specific areas of entrepreneurship being covered in the curriculum.

Topics and speakers:

Media Entrepreneurship Journeys

with Kimbap Media Founder [Emma Carew Grovum](#), and WURD Radio President & CEO [Sara Lomax-Reese](#)

Sales and Fundraising Strategy

with Hearken co-founder [Jennifer Brandel](#)

Growth, Sustainability, and Economic Justice

with [Alicia Bell](#), director of the Racial Equity in Journalism Fund and the founding director of Media 2070

Funders and Philanthropists

with American Press Institute Executive Director & CEO [Michael Bolden](#) and Pivot Fund founder [Tracie Powell](#)



PMFE entrepreneurs meet in person for the first time at Booker's Bayou Jazz Cafe.. Photo by Zamani Feelings

In-Person Activities

In-person social events gave cohort members opportunities to connect outside of the formal learning sessions. These events unfolded throughout the program and were designed around participants' comfort with COVID and health guidelines. The in-person events created space for the cohort to connect and bond, share learnings from the program, brainstorm about collaborations, and dream. Social and in-person activities included:

Kickoff Happy Hour at Booker's lounge

In-person coworking at CultureWorks, with two coaches in attendance

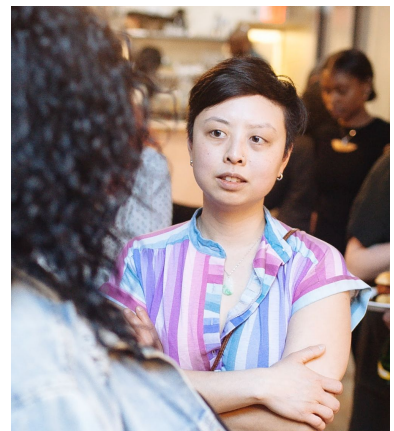
Bowling at South Bowl, where families were invited as well

Happy hour and meet and greet

with [Jim Friedlich](#), Lenfest Institute executive director & CEO, IPMF President [Molly de Aguiar](#), President, and IPMF Program Associate [Karla Jimenez-Magdalen](#)

Celebration ceremony at the Discovery Center

in partnership with [WHYY's News & Information Community Exchange \(N.I.C.E.\)](#), a collaborative network of grassroots content providers



Coaching and Community Catalyst Support

The coaches for the program, identified by Black & Brown Founders, Locus Mobility co-founder and CEO [Harry Michel](#), Splash Coworking Founder and CEO [Carina Boston Pinales](#), and Lillo Consulting founder [Opeola Bukola](#). All of the coaches are entrepreneurs and actively run businesses and consulting practices. Each program participant was paired with a coach and provided with free coaching services, up to 2 hours a month, throughout the duration of the program. These services were optional, and coaches were available to talk through specific business challenges, answer questions regarding the Bootcamp curriculum, and support founders' accountability around their goals and project priorities.

Participants noted that coaching was helpful for long-term planning and conceptualizing how to grow, sustain, and scale their organizations.

Each cohort member also met with the Community Catalyst individually and received ongoing support through email exchanges and phone calls as needed and on an individual basis. The Community Catalyst initiated conversations and check-ins with cohort members who needed support. Examples include talking through the funding application questions, well-being checks if they were sick or distressed, and pep talks if they were falling behind.

Broader Ecosystem Participation

To further build on the spirit of collective learning and knowledge, PMFE invited media entrepreneurs from the Philadelphia ecosystem who had applied but not been selected for the cohort to engage. This invitation included:

| An offer to speak with applicants one-on-one about their business and application materials

| A 95% discount (a price of \$95) to the Bootstrapping Bootcamp

| Attendance to the first Friday learning sessions with BBF

A total of eight applicants who were not selected scheduled follow up meetings with the Community Catalyst and were connected to other opportunities and supported with strategic advice. Resources offered included grants, introductions to media partners such as PhillyCAM and Resolve.

Three applicants who were not selected attended the first BBF session, two attended the second session, and none attended the final two sessions.

One applicant who was not selected took advantage of the \$95 discount.



PILLAR 4: Follow-On Funding

The follow-on funding aspect of the program was designed to give cohort members the opportunity to apply for additional funding at two points during the program, based on our assumption that their understanding of their needs for growth and sustainability would evolve over the course of the program. The follow-on funding process was designed to empower the cohort to co-design the distribution of the funds, provide transparency into the work of their peers, and strengthen their skills in presenting and applying for additional funding.

We referenced the local collaborative reporting work and funding approach led by [Resolve Philly](#), which makes a pot of funds available for reporting projects and members can apply if they have ideas that align with the project's goals. Their funding process requires a written application which is shared with the collaborative, a verbal pitch to the collaborative members summarizing the application questions, and approvals or declines by the members following the pitch.

We modeled Resolve's processes by: 1) having PMFE cohort members complete an application in Submittable, which we then shared with the entire cohort for review; 2) requiring a verbal pitch to the cohort members; and 3) giving cohort members the ability to recommend approvals or declinations to the funding team. To ensure alignment with the funders' policies and practices, the funding team maintained the final approval for funding.

For the first round of follow-on funding, the cohort had the opportunity to participate in a co-design session with the project team to explore priorities for the use of the funds, application questions, and approval requirements. During that session, the PMFE team, which included representatives from The Lenfest Institute, Knight-Lenfest Fund, and Zebras Unite, asked the following questions:

- : What are you learning and how are you applying your learning to your business?
- How has your budget changed from the start of the program until now, and how could additional funding support sustainability, growth or innovation?
- What should be funded in the first round and second round? (projects, operation, overhead?)
- Not everyone will apply for follow-on funding and not everyone will apply for funding in each round. With limited funds released each round, should there be a maximum amount people can apply for? If yes, how much?
- What questions should be asked in the application?
- What should be considered for approval?

Co-Design Session References:

[Follow-On Funding Process Preparation](#) | [Jamboard Work Session](#) | [Session Recording](#) | [Post Session Report](#)

The suggestions and feedback gleaned from this process then informed the structure for the first round of follow-on funding, outlined below.

Round 1

The first round for follow-on funding applications was open from April 26 - May 9

The cohort members wanted to ensure that all submitted applications could be supported from the available pool of \$30,000, and therefore agreed on a maximum grant request amount of \$2500 to ensure equal distribution across 12 members of the cohort. Participants could also pitch collaborative projects, e.g., 3 cohort members working together can receive up to \$7500 for their project.

PDFs of each submission were shared with the cohort in advance of the optional session on Friday, May 13, where everyone who submitted an application shared a three-minute pitch.

During the May 13 session, participants pitched to the cohort, as well as guest [Najaah Yasmine Daniels](#), founding CEO of from the Inclusive Capital Collective, and Omidyar Network principal [Aniyia Williams](#), who were invited to provide additional feedback on each pitch.

Cohort members recommend funding for each application via thumbs up on the Zoom screen. More than half the cohort in attendance had to 'recommend' the project for it to advance to the next stage. Those not recommended by more than half by the cohort were asked to resubmit for the next batch of funding and work with their coach on proposal.

Ten cohort members applied for funding. Eight pitched and were recommended for funding by the cohort. A ninth cohort member pitched at the top of the next session and was also recommended. The funding team approved all applications recommended for funding by the cohort.

After the first follow-on funding round, the project team received feedback on the process from cohort members that led to changes in the second round. This feedback included recommendations to remove the cap on the amount of funds cohort members could apply for, as well as changing the voting mechanism to increase confidentiality.

Round 2

There was \$50,000 available for Round 2 of follow-on funding and \$9,200 remaining from Round 1, totaling \$59,200 in available funding.

The applications opened May 25, with a deadline of June 6. As noted above, cohort members could apply for any amount based on their assessment of their business's needs.

PDFs of each submission were shared with the cohort in advance of the optional session on Friday, June 10, where everyone who submitted an application shared a 3-minute pitch.

During the June 10 session, participants pitched to the cohort as well as to Outlier Media Executive Director [Candice Fortman](#), who was invited to provide additional feedback on each pitch.

Cohort members filled out a Google form for each pitch and were able to recommend, partially recommend, or decline to recommend funding.

Ten cohort members applied for funding. Ten pitched and were recommended for funding by the cohort. The PMFE team approved, either partially or in-full, all applications recommended by the cohort.



Zarinah Lomax shares hopes to collaborate with the entrepreneurs of PMFE and N.I.C.E..

Funding Totals

The follow-on funding totals were announced by The Lenfest Institute on July 14. The total amounts including the \$10,000 initial grants and follow-on funding are:

ENTREPRENEUR	PROJECT	TOTAL FUNDING	FUNDING USED FOR
Sofiya Ballin	<u>Black History Untold</u>	\$17,500	Consulting, project development
Jean-Pierre Brice	<u>CMP Radio</u>	\$18,500	Staffing, equipment
Alex Lewis	<u>Rowhome Productions</u>	\$17,500	Staffing, technology
Joshua Meekins	<u>Mike Jay Films</u>	\$17,500	Program support, collaboration (with Higher Than 7)
Indah Nuritasari	<u>Indonesian Lantern</u>	\$13,000	Overhead costs (office space)
Sheila Quintana Aguilar	Alebrije Motions	\$14,970	Staffing, business incorporation, consulting
Shameka Sawyer	<u>5 Shorts Project</u>	\$17,500	Consulting
Lauren Settles	<u>We Talk Weekly</u>	\$19,740	Project support
Kaia Shivers	<u>Ark Republic</u>	\$12,500	Staffing
Kristal Sotomayor	<u>Sotomayor Productions</u>	\$19,990	Marketing/branding, staffing
Anis Taylor	<u>Higher Than 7</u>	\$20,500	Staffing, equipment

**Note: Zarinah Hameen (Au'loni Media Group) received a total of \$5,800. Zarinah resigned from the program and has been removed from public announcements and press statements.*



PILLAR 5: Momentum Collective

The Momentum Collective was one of the more emergent aspects of the program design. Initially, the consulting team conceptualized the Momentum Collective as a group of interested cohort members who would devote additional time and energy to build access to collective resources, financial and otherwise, within the media ecosystem. The project team initially planned to compensate the PMFE entrepreneurs for this additional work, assuming a cohort size of no more than ten participants. However, the project team decided to expand the cohort using the funding previously imagined for the Momentum Collective.

Even though the funding was allocated to allow additional access to the PMFE, Zebras Unite Founding Member Jennifer Mizgata offered in-kind support to PMFE and helped support the evolution of this pillar of the program to build upon the spirit of power-building and shared ownership embedded in the idea of the Momentum Collective. Doing so allowed the project team to adapt its hypothesis based on the needs and capabilities we observed among the cohort once it was formed. One of the most urgent and obvious needs was to take a step back and reassess the cohort's familiarity with how grantmaking and funding works. Our initial design made assumptions about cohort participants' expertise and experience in this regard, including their comfort drafting proposals, pitching ideas, securing fiscal sponsorship, and asking for follow-on funding.

As a result of our ongoing learnings, we recast the Momentum Collective to focus on some core activities and acumen identified by the project team and listening phase, namely for all cohort participants to deepen their understanding of applying for funding based on clearly defined budgets and their assessed needs for based on operational and programmatic goals. As such, we decided to use the two rounds of follow-on funding to apply collective and participatory resource allocation processes, as outlined above, rooted in the guiding ethos that inspired the idea of the Momentum Collective during the program design phase.

In addition to the follow-on funding process, other Momentum Collective activities and objectives included:

EMPOWERING participants with insight on how to navigate funding applications and decision-making processes related to funding;

LISTENING to peer cohort member pitches and recommending funding approvals to the funder;

INVITING speakers to share experiences with cohort members about collaborative and cooperative ways of generating revenue and building a sustainable business infrastructure;

INVITING local, national, and global media entrepreneurs to learn about the cohort's businesses in group sessions;

INTRODUCING the cohort's work to relevant funders and supporters

With a weekly meeting cadence, these activities were ultimately rolled out through the engagement of media leaders who participated in the follow-on funding pitches. During the funding pitch sessions, guests were invited to share insights from their work and impacts and then participate in the pitch review and feedback. This allowed the cohort to benefit from the guests' expertise while also providing the guests an opportunity to learn about the cohort's businesses and goals. Each guest also extended invitations to connect with the cohort members after the sessions to deepen their connections.

Momentum Collective/Pitch Session Contributors

Aniyia Williams

Principal, The Tech We Want, Omidyar Network

Najaah Yasmine Daniels

Founding CEO, Inclusive Capital Collective

Candice Fortman

Executive Director, Outlier Media

A secondary goal of the Momentum Collective, and an area of expertise held by Zebras Unite, was to engender a spirit of shared ownership and begin to introduce collective ownership to the cohort participants. This education was achieved through:

A session led by Mara Zepeda, managing director of Zebras Unite, describing the organization's cooperative ownership model

Each participant receiving Collective Courage A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice by Dr. Jessica Gordon Nembhard

Upon graduation from the cohort, waived membership dues for one year to the Zebras Unite Co-op

Reference

[Full Calendar of speakers and activities](#)

Metrics

Community Definitions of Success and Sustainability

Entrepreneur Self-Assessments

Deepening Budget Skills

Sense of Power and Self-Efficacy

Professional Wins

- Grants, Sponsorships, Awards, and Publicity
- Business and Professional Development Milestones
- Collaborations and Community-Building
- Personal Well-being

As previously noted, PMFE is in direct alignment with the goals of The Lenfest Institute and the Knight-Lenfest Fund to invest in a diverse, thriving news media marketplace. The Institute recognizes that no one news and information organization will meet the diverse needs of the Philadelphia ecosystem and therefore, the Institute is working to define different pathways to sustainability while also ensuring a broad diversity of voices in leadership and ownership at media organizations that reflect the communities they're serving.

The Institute's work supporting an interconnected ecosystem of Philadelphia's news and information providers serves as a catalyst for achieving these goals and drives its three-tiered investment approach, which focuses on:

INDIVIDUALS with an emphasis on journalists, entrepreneurs, and media makers of color

ORGANIZATIONS including legacy, community-based, and startup publishers

ECOSYSTEM projects and resources that serve the news ecosystem as a whole

The PMFE initiative serves as an early investment in this funding model and has informed the Institute's new approach to measuring impact in the Philadelphia media ecosystem, published in June 2022. The metrics outlined in this report helps contribute to how the Institute and the Knight-Lenfest Fund will continue to monitor the progress and impact of their investments in BIPOC leadership and founders.



Videographer, Aidan Un captures footage of a connection exercise led by Diana Lu

Community Definitions of Success and Sustainability

During the Listening and Discovery Phase of the PMFE project, interviewees were asked to identify what success and sustainability would look like for BIPOC communities and media companies. This process elicited several common themes that align with and provide additional dimension and texture to the metrics identified by the Lenfest Institute, and are summarized below:

SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

BIPOC ownership and representation at all levels of media production and distribution

The ability to tell stories for and about BIPOC communities that are often overlooked by mainstream media

Autonomy, where media makers create media and companies on their own terms
The ability to grow, scale, transition or evolve

Creating opportunities for and empowerment of BIPOC individuals and communities

Personal transformation, health and healing, wealth-building, and leaving a legacy

SUSTAINABILITY LOOKS LIKE

Having a business plan with reasonable targets, diverse income streams, and assets that can be leveraged to grow the business

Relationships of trust and respect with communities that facilitate the production of mutual value

Having strong and supportive teams and being able to provide opportunities to people in one's community

The ability for people to show up to work as their full selves, and to access benefits and resources to prioritize their health, healing, and wellbeing

Long-term relationships of trust and support between media makers and the people and organizations in the position to resource their work

Both the metrics from the Lenfest Institute and the Knight-Lenfest Fund and the visions for success and sustainability from media entrepreneurs themselves point to central importance of 1) growth and development as an business owner, 2) reciprocal relationships of trust and support between entrepreneurs and their communities, as well as with other entrepreneurs and news organizations and other sectors, organizations, and network that will provide mutual benefit, and 3) strong business foundations with proven revenue models to ensure a vital and health news and information ecosystem in Philadelphia.

Data collected from surveys, one-on-one conversations, and group discussions throughout the program indicate that PMFE made a meaningful contribution to all three areas listed above.

Entrepreneur Self-Assessments

At the end of the program, participants assessed their growth as business owners through the course of the program. The following table summarizes their responses:

AREA FOR SELF ASSESSMENT (RATED ON A SCALE OF 1-10)	BEGINNING OF PROGRAM	END OF PROGRAM	CHANGE (AVERAGE)
Your understanding or articulation of your company’s value proposition?	7.09	9.27	+2.18
The clarity of your business model?	5.00	8.64	+3.64
Your understanding of who your customers are, as well as their wants and needs?	6.00	8.45	+2.45
Your understanding of your audience?	6.45	9.09	+2.64
Your confidence as a business owner?	5.09	8.45	+3.36

These data suggest that participation in the inaugural PMFE cohort equipped the participants with a more comprehensive grasp of the fundamental value of their businesses, as well as how to define a business model to deliver that value to customers and audiences alike.

Deepening Budget Skills

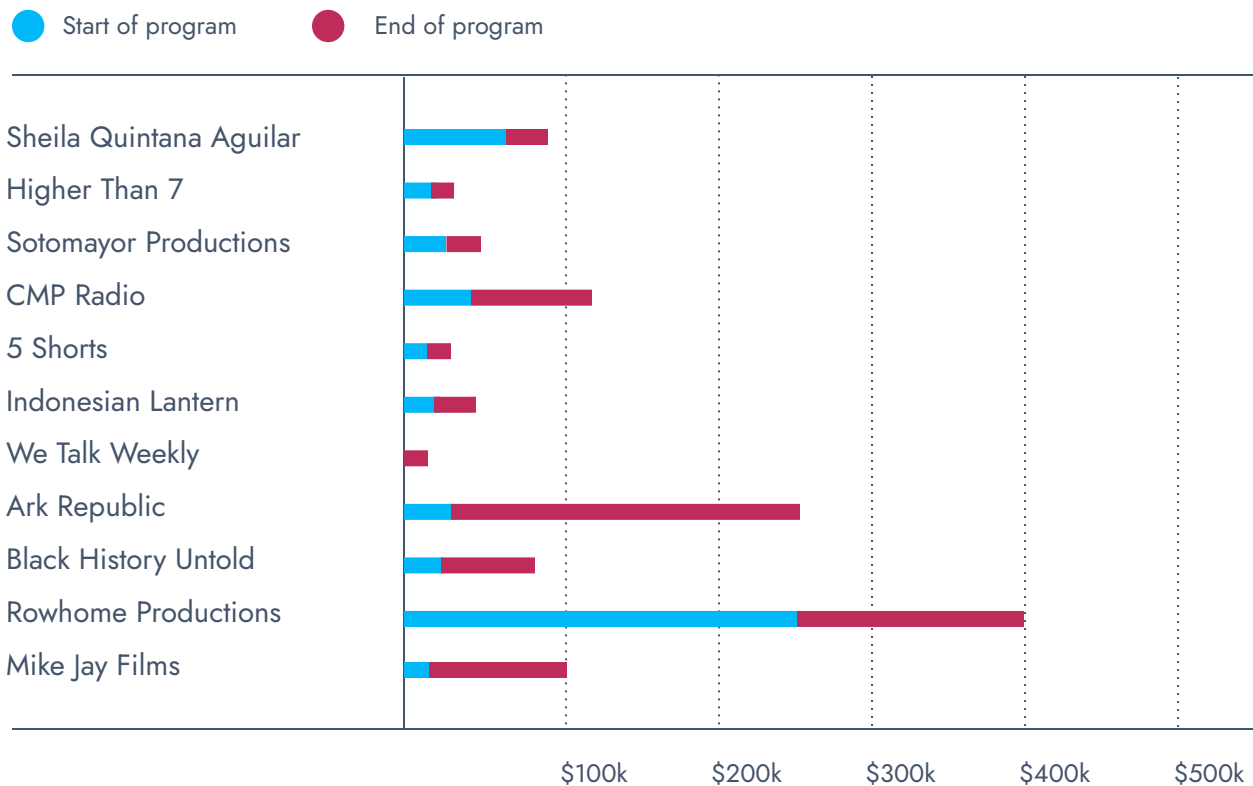
A core component of the Black & Brown Founders Bootstrapping Bootcamp was to help the PMFE cohort participants understand the true cost of doing business. For many in the cohort, this deep-dive into budgeting was eye-opening and allowed them to reevaluate what they needed for their businesses—and themselves as entrepreneurs—to thrive.

“The Black & Brown Founders bootcamp helped tremendously...[to] rebrand our company with intentions of increasing our revenue... With the funding from the program, we used the money to start our very first operating budget.” – PMFE Cohort Member

Compared to the reported revenue across the cohort at the beginning of the program, PMFE participants’ projected revenue needs increased by 145% by the end of the program. It’s important to note that this does not reflect actual earned revenue, but rather a change in cohort participants’ assessment of their expenses and the revenue required to sustain or grow their operations. This more realistic, scalable budgetary assessment is a milestone for entrepreneurs, taking them from the mindset of seeing themselves as a solopreneur, to advancing to scalable growth supported by their first employee, contractor, or small team.

	ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET (AT START OF PROGRAM)	ANNUAL OPERATING BUDGET (AT END OF PROGRAM)
Cohort Total	\$479,000	\$1,176,000
Cohort Average	\$43,545	\$106,909

PMFE Budgets by Company



Cohort members also viewed the follow-on funding process as integral to applying the budgeting lessons learned in the Bootcamp. When asked how helpful the follow-on funding process was in assessing their business's sustainability and/or growth needs on a scale from 1-10, participants responded with a 9 on average.

Importantly, the fact that this process was tied to actual financial resources through the follow-on funding process, allowed cohort participants to generate momentum, with support to turn toward turning their revenue projections into reality. When asked how helpful the follow-on funding process was in meeting their business's sustainability and/or growth needs on a scale from 1-10, participants responded with a 9.45 on average.

Sense of Power and Self-Efficacy

One of the core ideas rooted in the program design was the importance of building power among Philadelphia's BIPOC media entrepreneurs. This includes a felt sense of power and self-efficacy among the participants in the PMFE program. Based on the principles embedded in the Momentum Collective, the project team aimed to create on-going opportunities to contribute to the cohort's growth in this area.

One of the core ideas rooted in the program design was the importance of building power among Philadelphia's BIPOC media entrepreneurs. This includes a felt sense of power and self-efficacy among the participants in the PMFE program. Based on the principles embedded in the Momentum Collective, the project team aimed to create on-going opportunities to contribute to the cohort's growth in this area.

When asked how much the PMFE program contributed to cohort members' sense of power and/or self-efficacy in creating change in the Philadelphia news ecosystem on a scale of 1-10, participants responded with 8.73 on average. While we did not ask participants to self-assess at the beginning of the program, this high average indicates that the cohort ended the program feeling empowered to contribute to a changing and thriving media ecosystem.

"Before the cohort, I'd been focused on the role that media-making can play in systems-level change. Now I see that I have a role to play in also evolving the media system itself as an entrepreneur in a community of entrepreneurs." — PMFE Cohort Member

Participant Quotes



"I learned a lot from the Black & Brown Founders classes on how to do business more professionally and effectively. Before this program, I was never forced to rethink my business model, brand audit, marketing pitch, etc. and during the program I had to spend time doing all of that and I am very thankful that I did that. This program not only gave me the funds to be able to do the projects we were planning to do, but also gave us the tools to do it, and more." — PMFE Cohort Member

"The Black & Brown Founders bootcamp gave me a new perspective about my business, customers, and goals. I learned how to really assess my customers' needs by reaching out to them and getting their feedback. I learned to plan and structure my business in a way that will enable me to have my ideal day and ideal income. I'm not much of a "planner" and I knew this was my main challenge. This program has helped me to think differently about how I plan and actually made the planning process easier." — PMFE Cohort Member

"The most important lessons I've learned from the PMFE program...are related to how to better optimize my time and energy through increasing our business' capacity to make projects and systems run as efficiently as possible. Through conversations with the cohort and my coach, I was able to better understand what my role in our business should look like...I've created more time to work on business development... [which] has allowed [us] to take on more projects, increase our capacity, and increase our revenue." — PMFE Cohort Member



Professional Wins

During their time in the program, members of the PMFE cohort experienced a number of professional wins, from achieving business milestones to being recognized for their work to collaborating with other cohort members. We summarize these wins below based on information from the final program survey, celebration ceremony, and comments made during our educational sessions.



GRANTS, SPONSORSHIPS, AWARDS AND PUBLICITY

5 SHORTS received the Sachs Program for Arts Innovation Alumni Award

ARK REPUBLIC was awarded a \$3,000 grant by Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, was named as a member of the inaugural cohort of CUNY's Craig Newmark J-School's Black Media Initiative's Black Media Product Strategy Program, and founder Kaia Shivers spoke at Reparations Discourse for the Truth Tellers Project and served as keynote speaker for WOMEN IN-NOVATION 4.0 for Small Business Week in Newark

CMP RADIO secured two significant sponsors and founder Jean-Pierre Brice was the opening speaker for the Fatherhood Seminar

WE TALK WEEKLY received a grant from Comcast for \$7,500 worth of targeted television ads to their audience



BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MILESTONES

5 SHORTS hired a paid intern for summer internship program, took a professional development class and bought software to track finances, bought new, upgraded camera equipment, and started a new youth video initiative in July

SOFIYA BALLIN won two Webby Awards for Black History Untold, Webby Winner; Social, Education & Discovery (Series & Campaigns) and People's Voice Winner; Social, Education & Discovery (Series & Campaigns)

CMP RADIO started paying their executive team after factoring them into the organizational budget, created a 24-hour podcast room that is open and available for rent, purchased equipment for mobile podcasting

HIGHER THAN SEVEN created a sustainable revenue generating plan

INDONESIAN LANTERN hired a full-time employee and a few part-time employees, moving away from their model of using freelancers

MIKE JAY FILMS created a plan to create consistent cash flow and hosted a successful live podcast at Roots Picnic

ROWHOME PRODUCTIONS created the Rowhome Fellowship, a 6-month paid position that will train individuals for a career in audio storytelling for those who identify as part of an under-represented group in podcasting will be eligible

SHEILA QUINTANA AGUILAR formalized her production company plan

SOTOMAYOR PRODUCTIONS secured contractors to help meet their goals, including a graphic designer and web designer to develop branding and marketing materials, and an accountant to support with tax preparation and incorporating as an LLC

WE TALK WEEKLY budgeted to be able to pay themselves, as well as freelance journalists and a contracted videographer, editor, director, and producer, for their voter suppression project this fall, hired a new intern, and will hire more interns in the fall 2022 semester



COLLABORATIONS AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

Throughout the program, participants offered advice and expertise from their own experiences, offering one-on-one calls and connections outside of the planned Friday meeting times to share expertise. As this cohort was designed to create an environment where participants supported each other's work and collaborated together, the team noted offers of support between cohort members throughout the program, which are including among the list of formal collaborations below:

5 SHORTS participated as a guest on **Higher Than 7's** show

ARK REPUBLIC participated as a panelist in Love Now Media's 11 Days of Love Stories event and is exploring a partnership with Love Now Media and WURD

BLACK HISTORY UNTOLD is partnering on production with **Mike Jay Films**

CMP RADIO, 5 SHORTS, AND MIKE JAY FILMS are exploring creating a documentary film together

HIGHER THAN 7 is deepening its collaboration with **Mike Jay Films** on the production and score of a feature film, *Oldhead: The Movie*

INDONESIAN LANTERN offered to share coworking space with **We Talk Weekly**

ROWHOME PRODUCTIONS partnered with **Technical.ly Philly** on an audio documentary

WE TALK WEEKLY is growing its content and distribution partnership with **Higher Than 7**



PERSONAL WELL BEING

Shameka Sawyer of **5 Shorts** took a break for some much-needed rest and decided to reduce her work week from six to five days

Jean-Pierre Brice of **CMP Radio** adjusted his time management to allow for more personal time for himself and with his children

Alex Lewis, co-founder of **Rowhome Productions**, took a week of vacation, which he hadn't previously been able to do

Lauren Settles and Charles Gregory of **We Talk Weekly** learned to take time off when they were feeling overwhelmed and to allow other team members to step in to support

Learnings and Opportunities for Iteration

Cohort Application Process

Project Team Composition

Internal Communications & Scheduling

Technology & Accessibility

Data Collection

Inclusivity

Throughout the design and implementation of PMFE's inaugural cohort, the project team was able to explore accountability mechanisms and new methods for testing assumptions and hypotheses through trial and error. A summary of core learnings from this process follows.

Cohort Application Process

The initial cohort included 12 participants, but one resigned and forfeited their award.

Based on this experience, we recommend that future application processes include a request for references who can speak to the validity and impact of the applicant's work. All finalists should have references checked in addition to interviews.

Project Team Composition

As the team worked to navigate the pandemic, virtual gatherings, and the health and wellness of all involved, the project team made a number of shifts to respond to personal challenges while upholding our commitment to the execution of the work.

Mara Zepeda held the role of Design Lead in Phase I and II of the project. As Phase III evolved, it became clear that Community Catalyst Jos Duncan Asé offered myriad gifts and talents, including an increased familiarity and comfort with Zebras Unite's methodology, systems and team, on the ground connections by virtue of being in Philadelphia, and keenly developed strategy having participated in similar cohort programs. As a result, Jos Duncan Asé assumed the role of Project Lead through the implementation of the cohort program, with Mara Zepeda serving as an advisor and strategist.

We believe this responsive and adaptive structure was a significant benefit to the project, demonstrating mutualism, adaptability, and cooperation in action. However, these changes were not always clearly communicated across the project team and to the cohort, resulting in ongoing confusion about how to engage with the project's leadership, with the exception of the Community Catalyst.

While it is important to respond to the emergent realities of a project, we ultimately learned the project's leadership team should be set at the beginning and should be involved through the end of the program cycle. Additionally, we recommend that the Community Catalyst play a significant role during Phases I and II of the project for continuity and sustained connection to on the ground communities.

Internal Communications & Scheduling

To get clarity around upcoming events, deadlines, and other program details, the cohort members relied on weekly emails from the entrepreneurship@lenfestinstitute.org email account, which served as the primary public contact for the program since 2021 and was also used to track applications to PMFE. A Notion page was also designed with a calendar that updated weekly, removing the previous week's activities and shuffling information.

Additionally, due to the iterative nature of the program, there were instances where event details were finalized without a significant amount of lead time. For example, while some speakers were invited early on, once the program was designed, others were invited based on the emergent needs of the cohort. We learned that we could have provided more lead time for these invitations, and also that the COVID-19 pandemic required lining up backup speakers based on the ever-shifting personal caregiving and health challenges that people face. We heard feedback from cohort members that these circumstances contributed to feelings of confusion around the program schedule, as well as frustration about missing events they weren't able to adequately plan to attend as busy entrepreneurs.

We learned the project needs a simple calendar, preferably in Google Docs, that remains intact so that people can track where they are in the curriculum, what events are upcoming, and what they might have missed. Additionally, this calendar should be as set as possible prior to the launch of the program so that participants are able to plan accordingly with substantial preparation time. With this level of preparation and expectation-setting, emails can be used to remind cohort members of key milestones or unforeseen changes in programming as needed.

Technology & Accessibility

Throughout the program, the project team used Google Docs, Airtable, Google Forms, Notion, Miro, Jamboards, Submittable, and the Black & Brown Founders platform to deliver and/or collect information from the cohort. Based on feedback from the cohort, we learned this degree of complexity in the use of tech platforms was too intricate and often burdensome. We also observed that most cohort participants were logging in to sessions from their phones, indicating the importance of using tools that are easily accessible on a mobile device.

While the future of in-person vs. virtual programming remains unclear, we recommend simplifying and streamlining the use of digital tools for any virtual programming to the core essentials: a video conferencing platform, email and a shared Google Drive, and the delivery platform for the core educational curriculum.

Data Collection

Requests for inputs such as surveys, co-design participation, and application processes may have felt disjointed and laborious. We collected information as part of the follow-on funding applications, after coaching sessions, and for the final survey. Co-design session invitations were announced 1-2 weeks in advance of the sessions. Though they were optional, cohort members felt a strong desire to show their commitment to the program and an obligation to participate. We learned we need to plan ahead for co-design sessions and streamline surveys between all parties so that we set the expectations for obtaining information early, and provide a full schedule with not only the class topics and instructors, but the survey, co-design and follow-on funding dates.

Inclusivity

Centering Black, indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC) entrepreneurs was a core element of the design and implementation of PMFE and the project team's engagement of Black & Brown Founders as the principal educational content delivery partner. During the course of the program, we received feedback that some members of the cohort felt the framing of the overall program and the BBF content was not inclusive of Asian or Asian-American entrepreneurs.

This feedback created an opportunity to have a conversation about inclusivity within BIPOC spaces, facilitated by Deldelp Medina, at the beginning of a regularly scheduled Friday learning session. During that conversation, Deldelp affirmed BBF's commitment to serving all entrepreneurs of color. We heard later that this conversation led to a greater sense of community and inclusivity within the cohort, particularly from the member that had raised the concerns.

This experience highlighted the importance of actively working to create an inclusive space, even within an exclusively BIPOC community of entrepreneurs, by addressing concerns as they arise and adapting language and framing as needed.



The Zebras Unite Project Team

Founding Members who participated in PMFE include:

Mara Zepeda, [Zebras Unite](#)
Jos Duncan Asé, [Love Now Media](#)
Jennifer Brandel, [Hearken](#)
Aria Joughin, [MakeWith](#)
Malii Watts-Witten, [EngageBetween](#)
Kate “Sassy” Sassoon, [Sassy Facilitation](#)
Deldelp Medina, [Black & Brown Founders](#)
Adrienne Schless-Meier, [Zebras Unite](#)
Jennifer Mizgata, [Media Consultant](#)

It should be noted and celebrated that Jos and Jennifer Mizgata joined Zebras Unite as Founding Members once the project was underway, when it became clear that their talents and gifts far exceeded what the co-op could offer when it came to financial compensation. This was a tremendous added benefit to the project team and cooperative overall.

Funding Partner Project Team

Shawn Mooring, The Lenfest Institute for Journalism
Samiya Green, The Lenfest Institute for Journalism
Diana Lu, Knight-Lenfest Local News Transformation Fund
Roxann Stafford, Knight-Lenfest Local News Transformation Fund

Appendix

- [Program Design and Implementation](#)
- [Condensed listening report](#)
- [OKRs for Local Ecosystem](#)
- [Review of Related Literature](#)
- Mid-point check-in survey
- Articles published by The Lenfest Institute
 - [Announcing the launch of PMFE](#)
 - [Introducing the entrepreneurs](#)
 - [Follow-on funding announcement](#)
 - [Sara Lomax-Reese / Emma Carew Grovum workshop](#)
 - [Main webpage with entrepreneur profiles](#)
 - [How The Lenfest Institute is measuring impact in the Philadelphia Media Ecosystem](#)
- Press about PMFE
 - [News at Knight Newsletter](#)