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February 23, 2026

***VIA U.S. MAIL AND ELECTRONIC MAIL***

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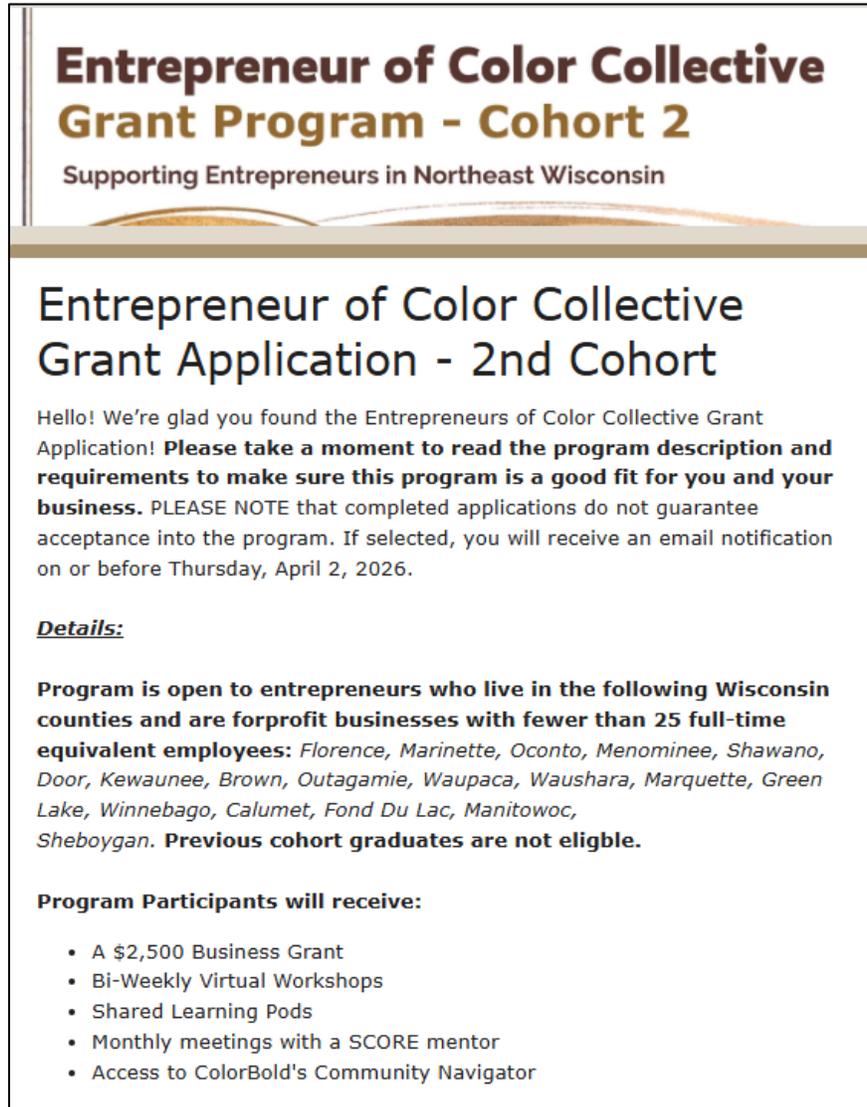
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**Re: Cease and Desist: Entrepreneur of Color Collective Grant Application**

To whom it may concern:

The Wisconsin Institute for Law & Liberty (WILL) is a litigation and policy center based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. One of our ongoing projects is the nationwide Equality Under the Law Project, which, since 2021, has represented over 80 individuals from 25 states, successfully litigating cases against state, local, and private race-based programs. Today, we are writing to demand that you eliminate all race-based qualifications in the Entrepreneur of Color Collective Grant (the “ECC Grant”).

The ECC Grant is a race-based \$2,500 business grant program that includes access to opportunities such as workshops, “shared learning pods,” mentorship meetings, and access to a “community navigator.” Details are available on the grant application website.<sup>1</sup> The grant program is only open to “entrepreneurs of color,” which apparently means non-white business owners.



**Entrepreneur of Color Collective  
Grant Program - Cohort 2**  
Supporting Entrepreneurs in Northeast Wisconsin

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## Entrepreneur of Color Collective Grant Application - 2nd Cohort

Hello! We're glad you found the Entrepreneurs of Color Collective Grant Application! **Please take a moment to read the program description and requirements to make sure this program is a good fit for you and your business.** PLEASE NOTE that completed applications do not guarantee acceptance into the program. If selected, you will receive an email notification on or before Thursday, April 2, 2026.

***Details:***

**Program is open to entrepreneurs who live in the following Wisconsin counties and are forprofit businesses with fewer than 25 full-time equivalent employees:** *Florence, Marinette, Oconto, Menominee, Shawano, Door, Kewaunee, Brown, Outagamie, Waupaca, Waushara, Marquette, Green Lake, Winnebago, Calumet, Fond Du Lac, Manitowoc, Sheboygan.* **Previous cohort graduates are not eligible.**

**Program Participants will receive:**

- A \$2,500 Business Grant
- Bi-Weekly Virtual Workshops
- Shared Learning Pods
- Monthly meetings with a SCORE mentor
- Access to ColorBold's Community Navigator

Later in the application, applicants must identify their race and ethnicity.

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<sup>1</sup> Entrepreneur of Color Collective Grant Program, Cohort 2 (last visited Feb. 16, 2026) available [here](#), and archive versions available [here](#) and [here](#).

**Please select the option below that best describes your ethnicity.** \*

I identify as Chicano/Chicana/Chicanx, Hispanic, or Latino/Latina/Latinx.

I do not identify as Chicano/Chicana/Chicanx, Hispanic, or Latino/Latina/Latinx.

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**Please select the option(s) below that best describe your race.** \*

**Select all that apply.**

Alaska Native, American Indian, Indigenous, or Native American

Asian

Black or African American

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

White

One or more races that are not listed above

In exchange for the \$2,500 grant, successful applicants must agree to attendance at “all Virtual Workshops and Shared Learning Pods,” “active participation,” meeting with “assigned SCORE mentor at least once per month,” meeting with “ColorBold’s community Navigator at least once between April to June 2026,” and submission of receipts and invoices.

WEDC funds this program through a \$95,000 grant, which was announced by Governor Tony Evers in April 2025.<sup>2</sup> The application indicates this grant program is run by ColorBold Business Association, Inc., in partnership with SCORE Mentors and UW-Madison.

**Powered by:** ColorBold Business Association, Inc.  
**Partnered with:** SCORE Mentors of Northeast Wisconsin and UW-Madison  
 Division of Extension - Outagamie & Winnebago counties  
**Sponsored by:** Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

<sup>2</sup> WEDC, Gov. Evers, WEDC Announce \$3.2 Million in Grants to Support Small Businesses Statewide, April 14, 2025 (last visited Feb. 16, 2026), available [here](#).

Federal law prohibits race-based grants like this. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 “prohibits racial discrimination in the making and enforcement of private contracts.” *Runyon v. McCrary*, 427 U.S. 160, 168 (1976). Now codified at 42 U.S.C. § 1981, the law provides that “all persons” shall have the right to “make and enforce contracts” without regard to race. *See McDonald v. Santa Fe Trail Transp. Co.*, 427 U.S. 273, 286 (1976). By conditioning the receipt of a grant on specific performance by a grantee, Section 1981 certainly applies to the ECC Grant. *See Am. All. for Equal Rts. v. Fearless Fund Mgmt., LLC*, 103 F.4th 765, 775 (11th Cir. 2024) (grants); *Am. All. for Equal Rts. v. Am. Bar Ass'n*, No. 25-CV-3980, 2026 WL 161596, at \*8 (N.D. Ill. Jan. 21, 2026) (scholarships); *Do No Harm v. Nat'l Ass'n of Emergency Med. Technicians*, No. 3:24-CV-11, 2025 WL 973614, at \*6 (S.D. Miss. Mar. 31, 2025) (grants). Moreover, to the extent you are a government official, or are working in concert with or under the color of state law by administering this program, 42 U.S.C. § 1983 similarly prohibits race discrimination. Finally, individuals working in concert with and in agreement to violate federal law constitutes a conspiracy to violate civil rights, or failing to prevent such a violation, are liable under the Ku Klux Klan Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 1985, 1986.

Liability under any one of these civil-rights statutes can result in significant potential liability, including punitive damages and attorney fees. Therefore, we are asking you to immediately cease imposing any race-based requirements for the ECC Grant, or to direct your program partners that you will no longer support race-based goals or requirements. These steps would include, without limitation, changing the name of the grant to eliminate the phrase “of color,” changing the application materials and other materials and public-facing websites to eliminate mentions of race, and to publicly and explicitly clarify that the grant is open to all otherwise eligible business owners without regard to race. Race can play no factor in this grant, not even a minor factor.

If you do not take these steps immediately, we are prepared to represent any otherwise eligible business in federal district court.

Sincerely,

WISCONSIN INSTITUTE FOR LAW & LIBERTY, INC.



Daniel P. Lennington  
Vice President & Deputy Counsel