

Second Cohort of Startups to Join Northwestern Mutual Black Founder Accelerator

Startups will receive \$100,000 investment, along with mentoring from industry-leading professionals

MILWAUKEE, Nov. 2, 2021 /PRNewswire/ -- Northwestern Mutual, in partnership with gener8tor, is honored to introduce the latest class of startups that will join the 2021 Northwestern Mutual Black Founder Accelerator powered by gener8tor.

"We're honored to be working alongside this talented group of founders and continue the positive momentum we've achieved through this innovative program," said Craig Schedler, managing director of Northwestern Mutual Future Ventures. "The first group of founders to go through the accelerator continues to raise funds and drive their businesses forward, and we're proud to continue our partnership with gener8tor to give more Black founders the opportunity to set their companies up for success."

This second group of founders builds on the success of the inaugural cohort, which concluded in June 2021 and included startups such as [HUED](#), which recently raised \$1.6 million from investors including Female Founders Fund and Serena Williams' VC fund, Serena Ventures.

"The Northwestern Mutual Sustained Action for Racial Equity Task Force is looking at racism and inequality from every perspective to bring about meaningful, lasting change across each of the communities we proudly serve," said Abim Kolawole, vice president of client experience with Northwestern Mutual. "The Black Founder Accelerator is core to that mission, closing the funding gap for Black entrepreneurs and ensuring they have the resources and support needed to help their companies thrive."

Each startup in the latest cohort will receive a \$100,000 investment and will work with gener8tor and Northwestern Mutual throughout the 12-week accelerator to grow their business. Founders are also paired with executive mentors from Northwestern Mutual and receive individualized coaching and mentoring from industry-leading insurance and financial professionals.

The participating startups span Northwestern Mutual Future Ventures' key strategic areas of focus, including fintech, insurtech, digital health and data analytics.

"After hundreds of office hours and applicant interviews with startups across the United States, we are thrilled to expand our portfolio to include this group of innovative founders," said Precious Drew, co-managing director of the Northwestern Mutual Black Founder Accelerator. "These entrepreneurs are working on solutions such as improving the hiring process for recruiters and reaching financial goals through social banking. The Northwestern Mutual and gener8tor teams are eager to welcome these companies into the second cohort."

The newest class includes startups from around the nation, including founders from Chicago, Indianapolis, Milwaukee and Washington, D.C.

"The influence of Black culture is prevalent across the world, yet implicit biases are creating barriers to the distribution of human wealth," stated YaaJoy Engel, co-managing director of the Accelerator. "The resources, mentorship and access provided by the Northwestern Mutual Black Founder Accelerator allow the uniqueness of the founders to be recognized in combating the stagnation, sameness and sterility we are experiencing in the tech world today."

The five startups listed below were selected to participate in and receive investments from the Northwestern Mutual Black Founder Accelerator powered by gener8tor:

Ablorde Ashigbi: CEO | ablorde@4degrees.ai | www.4degrees.ai

[4Degrees](#) (Chicago) empowers communities to better manage relationships. 4Degrees' software centralizes scattered information, reduces hours spent on data entry and offers teams an efficient way to track, maintain and collaborate on deals and relationships. **4Degrees has over 200 firms as customers and \$1M+ in annual recurring revenue.**

Bobola Odebiyi: CEO | bobolaodebiyi@crosskudi.com | www.crosskudi.com

[CrossKudi](#) (Milwaukee) offers a secure international money transfer platform for immigrants. CrossKudi is powered by blockchain infrastructure, making international money transfers affordable, instant and safe. CrossKudi is a Milwaukee-based Delaware C-Corp. **CrossKudi has conducted beta testing and established product market fit.**

Kevin Barrow: CEO | kevin@marklabs.co | www.marklabs.co

[Mark Labs, Inc.](#) (Washington, D.C.) helps investors better link their capital allocations to real-world outcomes. Through its ESG Engagement Engine, Mark Labs helps asset managers meet the demands from both clients and regulators for making sustainable investments and operating in a transparent, ESG compliant manner.

Devyn Mikell: Co-Founder | devyn@qualifi.hr | www.qualifi.hr

[Qualifi](#) (Indianapolis) powers the fastest phone interviews in the world. High-volume recruiters use Qualifi's automated phone interviews to make the hiring process more efficient, reducing initial screening time from weeks to minutes. **Qualifi has conducted over 10,000 interviews, secured contracts with 27 employers and surpassed \$247k ARR.**

Fonta Gilliam: CEO | fonta@wellthiapp.com | www.wellthiapp.com

[Wellthi](#) (Washington, D.C.) provides a B2B2C embedded social finance software designed to help institutions increase the lifetime value of customers by turning each customer into a community of customers. Customers use Wellthi to supercharge their financial goals in a social banking community of people they know and trust and that is connected to all of their accounts. **Wellthi is a venture-backed fintech company that has raised over \$1.7M to-date.**

About gener8tor

[gener8tor](#)'s turnkey platform for the creative economy connects startup founders, investors, corporations, universities, job seekers, musicians and artists. The gener8tor platform includes accelerators, upskilling, corporate programming, and conferences with content on community growth, impact investing, diversity, equity and inclusion, and innovation across education, agriculture, insurance, healthcare, and more. Recently, gener8tor was named one of Fast Company's Best Workplaces for Innovators. For more information, visit gener8tor.com.

Northwestern Mutual Black Founder Accelerator

The NMBFA is a joint collaboration between Northwestern Mutual and gener8tor to advance Black tech startups based in the United States focused on fintech, insurtech, digital health and data analytics. gener8tor is the administrator of the twelve-week accelerator that will run up to two cohorts of five Black led tech startups a year.

About Northwestern Mutual

[Northwestern Mutual](#) has been helping people and businesses achieve financial security for more than 160 years. Through a holistic planning approach, Northwestern Mutual combines the expertise of its financial professionals with a personalized digital experience and industry-leading products to help its clients plan for what's most important. With \$308.8 billion in total assets, \$31.1 billion in revenues, and \$2 trillion worth of life insurance protection in force, Northwestern Mutual delivers financial security to more than 4.75 million people with life, disability income and long-term care insurance, annuities, and brokerage and advisory services. The company manages more than \$200 billion of investments owned by its clients and held or managed through its wealth management and investment services businesses. Northwestern Mutual ranks 90 on the 2021 FORTUNE 500 and is recognized by FORTUNE® as one of the "World's Most Admired" life insurance companies in 2021.

Northwestern Mutual is the marketing name for The Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company (NM), Milwaukee, WI (life and disability insurance, annuities, and life insurance with long-term care benefits) and its subsidiaries. Subsidiaries include **Northwestern Mutual Investment Services, LLC** (NMIS) (investment brokerage services), broker-dealer, registered investment adviser, member FINRA and SIPC; the Northwestern Mutual Wealth Management Company® (NMWMC) (investment advisory and services), federal savings bank; and Northwestern Long Term Care Insurance Company (NLTC) (long-term care insurance).

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