

Philanthropy & Nonprofits

NYC group awards grants to five Cincinnati BIPOC-owned small businesses



By [Liz Engel](#) – Staff reporter, Cincinnati Business Courier

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Five Cincinnati BIPOC-owned small businesses hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic have been awarded grants as part of an anti-racism commitment launched by a New York City-based consultancy.

Switch Lighting & Design, Junebug Jewelry Designs, Court and Main Market, Nahamani.org and Sugar Innovations were awarded funds as part of an inaugural program run by Next Street, a consultancy for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

As part of its anti-racism commitment, Next Street committed to launching a grant program to provide funding to BIPOC-owned small businesses using a percentage of its annual profit. The selections also come as the spread of the Omicron variant continues to threaten small businesses' recovery from losses already suffered during the pandemic.

The program was limited to Cincinnati this year, but will likely be expanded in future years, a Next Street spokesperson said. The grant amounts were non-disclosed. The awardees will use the funds for various upgrades and initiatives:

- **Switch Lighting & Design:** Switch is a modern lighting, furniture and design emporium in Cincinnati's West Fourth Street historic district. Switch serves personal and commercial clients throughout the region and from New York City to San Francisco. During Covid-19, Switch suffered revenue losses of greater than 50%. Today, the company's biggest challenge is absorbing the increased national and international freight costs due to the breakdown of the global supply chain. With the Next Street grant award, Switch plans to upgrade its website to include video and other features to improve customer engagement.
- **Junebug Jewelry Designs:** Junebug Jewelry Designs celebrates women's empowerment and independence with original handmade designs. Each piece is a one-

of-a-kind, limited edition. During Covid-19, Junebug suffered revenue losses of greater than 50%, an attribute to a drop in customer foot traffic. With the Next Street grant, Junebug plans to launch new marketing initiatives.

- **Court and Main Market:** Court and Main Market, located downtown, is owned by [Slama Eminou](#). During Covid-19, Court and Main suffered revenue losses of greater than 70%. Throughout the pandemic, the business faced challenges with managing inventory and outdated refrigeration equipment. With the Next Street grant, the business plans to buy new refrigeration equipment and improve its point-of-sale system.
- **Nahamani.org:** Nahamani.org, founded in 2015, provides digital communication services to businesses and non-profits, including website design and development, content creation, branding and management consulting services. During Covid-19, Nahamani.org suffered revenue losses of greater than 30%. Many of its pre-existing clients were also adversely affected by Covid-19 and were struggling to meet their own financial obligations, which has put a strain on cash flow. With the Next Street grant award, Nahamani.org plans to improve its systems to scale the business, including setting up a CRM and automating other repetitive tasks.
- **Sugar Innovations:** Sugar Innovations is a dessert and sweets pop-up shop and catering business. During Covid-19, the business suffered revenue losses of greater than 50%. Prior to Covid-19, Sugar Innovations was in the process of building out a food truck, but the project was put on hold due to pandemic. With the Next Street grant award, the business plan to restart that project.

Next Street, which provides advisory services, capital enablement and program delivery, worked with the [513 Business Assist program](#) to nominate businesses. Partners included the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, the Urban League of Greater Southwestern Ohio, the Greater Cincinnati Microenterprise Initiative, Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky African American Chamber of Commerce and HCDC.

Applicants were scored via rubric by a committee and funds were formally announced in December.