

Mortar launches Iron Chest Fund to get cash to entrepreneurs

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(Photo: The Enquirer/Meg Vogel)

Cincinnati entrepreneurship lab Mortar is launching a new crowdfunding venture to help provide startup founders money to help grow their businesses.

Mortar has created the Iron Chest Fund and has rolled out a new campaign called [#100for100](#) to help identify financial backers. The Over-the-Rhine-based nonprofit organization is encouraging 100 people, businesses or organizations to donate between \$100 to \$1,000 to the Iron Chest Fund.

Mortar's mission calls for introducing people to entrepreneurship and providing them with an opportunity to work on their vision. Since the group's launch in 2014, more than 100 people have completed a nine-week business training course or participated in the Brick pop-up shop program.

But one of the biggest hurdles facing graduates of Mortar programs, many of whom are women or racial or ethnic minorities, is access to capital, said Derrick Braziel, a founding partner and managing director of Mortar. The Iron Chest Fund is designed to tackle that problem.

The #100for100 campaign already has an early champion. Matt Butler, president of Signature Hardware, will match up to \$50,000 in donations received for the Iron Chest Fund by Jan. 1.