REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

INDIANAPOLIS AFRICAN AMERICAN QUALITY OF LIFE INITIATIVE FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Food Justice and Quality Options

ISSUED:
MARCH 15, 2022

RESPONSES DUE:
APRIL 22, 2022
11:59 PM (Eastern Time)

For Submission Requirements see www.iaaqli.org
INTRODUCTION

The Indianapolis Urban League (IUL), with support and in partnership with National Urban League (NUL), the African American Coalition of Indianapolis (AACI), its member organizations, community groups, faith-based organizations, corporations, foundations, local and state public agencies and individuals, is implementing the Indianapolis African American Quality of Life Initiative (IAAQLI). Funded through a $100 million grant to NUL from Lilly Endowment, IAAQLI is mobilizing African American resources while also building collaborations and partnerships to elevate the quality of life of African Americans in Indianapolis/Marion County.

IAAQLI focuses on five priority issue areas affecting the quality of life of African Americans in Indianapolis: Business & Entrepreneurship, Education, Employment, Health and Wellness, and Housing and Homeownership. This Request for Proposal addresses the issue of Health and Wellness. IAAQLI invites eligible applicants to submit projects/programs that address strategies for Food Justice and Quality Options.

BACKGROUND

NEED FOR FOOD JUSTICE AND QUALITY OPPORTUNITIES:

As of 2019, thirty-two (32) percent of Black residents of Indianapolis (about 38,000 individuals) live in food deserts—nearly twice as many individuals as white residents. Though these trends exist for Black residents regardless of income, low-income Black residents are particularly at risk of lacking access to affordable and healthy food. Black Hoosiers seeking Medicaid and support through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are substantially more likely than other racial groups to report not having enough money for food in Marion County. This gap increased and peaked during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and has since persisted despite an increase in food pantries and federal food and income assistance during the same time.

Though improving food access is not the only goal of an equitable food system, it remains a component subject to numerous policy barriers for Black individuals. Black households and neighborhoods are disproportionately affected by food access issues that are exacerbated by policy decisions. Redlining and disinvestment in majority-Black Indianapolis neighborhoods are linked to decreased numbers of grocery stores in these areas. Indiana’s Black farmers have been targeted in ways that disincentivize Black individuals in these professions. Those who remain are significantly underpaid, and efforts to rectify these gaps have been recently
challenged in federal courts\(^v\). Among those employed in the food system nationally, Black men only earn $.83 on the dollar compared to white men; Black women earn even less $.53 by comparison\(^v\).

Families with children, especially those who are housing unstable\(^vi\), may not consistently access free breakfast and lunch throughout the year and outside of the school day, despite local and federal efforts. Funding cuts frequently target efforts related to health education, and few schools readily discuss and engage students in learning and developing skills in farming, gardening, or other aspects of the food system. Lack of transportation in Black Indianapolis neighborhoods further complicates food access\(^vii\), especially for older adults. For all Black residents, these inequitable experiences are associated with disproportionate adverse health and life course outcomes. In addition to higher rates of nutrition-related outcomes, such as obesity and diabetes, negative trends in unemployment, housing, and education further complicate Black residents' ability to participate in meaningful, self-sustaining ways in Indianapolis' food economy. Black areas and individuals are consistently likely to be food insecure, experience poor nutrition-related health outcomes, and are systemically targeted in ways that prevent quality food access and greater control over their experiences in the local food system. For example, Black Americans have been prevented from participating consistently and profitably from agricultural occupations, opportunities, and start-up capital for related enterprises; are underpaid in food-related professions; and lack consistent exposure to education about food and farming in local schools. These factors have all contributed to a lack of food access, but more importantly, a lack of food sovereignty nationally and among Black Indianapolis neighborhoods. In short, the development and sustaining of a food system in Indianapolis that strives for equity for Black residents should address and improve these outcomes and barriers.

**PROJECT GOALS AND SCOPE**

**IAAQLI STRATEGY TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS**

Food justice addresses the rights of communities of color to rectify systemically negative practices toward them in land ownership, agricultural practices, distribution of technology and resources, and workers' rights, in addition to access to nutritious, culturally appropriate, and affordable food\(^viii\). In summary, food justice efforts that assume current and historical practices within the U.S. food system prevent equitable access to food, in this case for Black communities.
A food justice/sovereignty perspective moves beyond food access and aims to dismantle systems that have not been working well to empower Black Indianapolis residents. This lens is critical for creating access and opportunity for Black residents beyond short-term food access and consumption. We endorse the development of a just and holistic food system that addresses the primary components of a food system (see the figure to the left): production, processing, distribution, and consumption. This effort does not seek to replace the numerous existing food insecurity-related strategies across Indianapolis; rather, we aim to center the needs of Black residents, neighborhoods, populations, families, and organizations within these efforts. Effective coordination and collaboration across various entities involved in the food system are critical to lasting and systemic barrier reduction and must be demonstrated as well.

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

We recognize that achieving outcomes related to food justice and sovereignty require substantial time and investment. Additionally, pursuing food justice will involve diverse, creative, and collaborative efforts. Short-term outcomes will vary given an individual organization’s planned activities; however, there are several medium and long-term outcomes, at least one of which should be addressed by any applicant. Demonstrating effective collaboration across topics and sectors of the food system are critical and should be considered a key step to achieving meaningful outcomes. IAAQLI has identified the following strategy to respond to the need:

**STRATEGY: Food Justice and Quality Options**

The purpose of this funding opportunity is to support the development and sustainability of a Black-centric food system—from production to consumption. This system will reduce barriers and increase access to food through high-quality services that are culturally relevant and sensitive to lived experiences of Black
Indianapolis residents. Like other food justice pursuits, the objective is to surround Black residents with resources to improve food access through empowerment to grow and manage community food economies. The following are potential key areas of change we would like to see from funded efforts:

- Increased access to food (through land acquisition, cultivation, and distribution) among Black individuals and residents of Black neighborhoods
- Greater coordination and cross-sector community partnerships for Black residents within local food systems
- Increased employment and representation of Black individuals in all aspects of the food system with equitable wages, access, and opportunity
- Increased support for food entrepreneurs (e.g., local growers and producers) and urban agriculture that directly and meaningfully serve Black residents
- Increased focus on a holistic healthy food system in Black Indianapolis and support of its potential differences from existing structures
- Greater support for ambassadors or community experts for nutrition, food system employment, and training in all stages of the food system among Black Indianapolis residents

Under IAAQLI, NUL has committed $3,000,000 in funding for this strategy in this first round. NUL will award grants ranging from a minimum of $50,000 to a maximum of $300,000 for up to 3 years. Award amounts are subject to change.

**ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

**ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS**

Funding is restricted to organizations that are public charities described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (Code). To be eligible for a grant award through this RFP, preference will be given to organizations that are African American-led and that is embedded in communities serving African American residents in Marion County, Indiana. In reviewing applications, preference will be given to organizations that include a plan for measurable milestones, outcome reporting, and collaborative project/program teams.

These organizations may apply independently or decide to collaborate with other organizations to deliver project/program activities. If applying with a collaborating organization or with a consortium of organizations, the applicant must include a letter(s) of support from those collaborators (signed by their authorized official) in the application. A letter of support should outline the collaborator’s roles and
contributions in delivering the required project/program, experience, expertise, and knowledge. It is preferred that collaborating organizations are based in Indiana and preferably, reside in Indianapolis. Collaborating organizations may or may not be African American-led or not-for-profit.

**ELEMENTS OF PROPOSAL**

**APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**


2. All applications will be reviewed and screened by IUL and its IAAQLI partners. Criteria will include certification of Code section 501(c)3 public charity status (including a Letter of IRS Determination), the 990 of the organization, and clear identification of the IAAQLI strategy your organization plans to address, and adherence to other program requirements.

**IAAQLI GRANT APPLICATION**

The following section provides a general overview of questions grant seekers will need to answer in the application process. Applications, like the Letter of Intent, will be submitted through the IAAQLI Smarter Select system. Applications should address or include the following:

a) The target audience for the proposed project/program, including the geographic location served and points of service (including where the services will be offered and how the Black community will be able to access the services).

b) A detailed project budget to accompany the applicant’s grant request material. The budget must be completed on the IAAQLI Budget Template.

c) How the project/program activities will meet the eligibility criteria of the proposed funding strategy.

d) A description of the project/program team and the management structure for the project/program; a description of the organization’s leadership and staffing.

e) How the project/program will address the gaps in the food access ecosystem for African American residents and how it will contribute towards the achievement of the proposal’s objectives and expected results. *(The information should describe what you are offering, how you will deliver, your proven track record, past experiences and your level of expertise related to entrepreneurship. If your project/program includes*...
collaborations with other organizations, please also describe their role, track record, experience, and expertise).

f) Key activities you will undertake in this project/program and the proposed length of the project/program.

g) Plans for future sustainability after the grant funds are exhausted.

h) A statement of Revenue and Expense for the organization's most recently completed fiscal year.

i) A commitment that IUL will receive a certificate of insurance ("COI") naming NUL as an additional insured from each individual or organization receiving funding from NUL under IAAQLI.

PROCEDURE FOR PROSPECTIVE GRANT APPLICANTS

1. Applicants must submit responses to this RFP online by the indicated due date.

2. You should expect to receive notification of awards/declines by the end of May 2022. Please note, awards and grant agreement letters will come from National Urban League.

3. Grant Agreements are sent to funded organizations and must be signed by an officer of the organization and returned by the due date indicated.

4. Funds are delivered after award approval and receipt of a signed Grant Agreement unless requested later.

5. Grant recipients are required to submit Grant Summary Reports at six-month intervals. Reports should update us on the progress of your funded project/program. A final report will be required at the conclusion of the award period. Reporting requirements and dates are included in the Grant Agreement. Please be sure to put the due dates on your calendar. If you do not submit your reports on a timely basis, we will not be able to provide scheduled future funding until those reports are made current.

SELECTION & EVALUATION PROCESS

Each submitted proposal will be reviewed by a team of evaluators. An IAAQLI staff representative will oversee the proposal evaluation process. Each proposal will be evaluated based on the following criteria, among others:

- Eligibility: The extent to which the organization meets the criteria regarding who can apply.
- Alignment: The extent to which the organization demonstrates how it will address gaps and challenges in the housing ecosystem (focusing on
racial equity within that ecosystem), in alignment with this strategy's stated objectives and expected results.

- Experience and capacity: The ability of the organization to deliver on the proposed project activities and the applicant's and/or collaborator's technical and financial management capacity. Organizations are highly encouraged to leverage resources by fostering partnerships and by demonstrating economies of scale.
- Feasibility: The extent to which the project is sound and financially feasible.

## ANTICIPATED RFP TIMELINE

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date/Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>RFP Date of Issue</td>
<td>March 15, 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written Questions from Q&amp;A session Due to Email: <a href="mailto:info@iaaqli.org">info@iaaqli.org</a></td>
<td>March 28, 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>IUL Posts Answers to Questions</td>
<td>April 2, 2022</td>
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<tr>
<td>RFP Proposals Due to Smarter Select</td>
<td>April 22, 2022, 11:59 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anticipated Proposal Awards</td>
<td>June 2022</td>
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## QUESTIONS AND INQUIRY PROCESS

All questions/inquiries regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing by the deadline of March 28, 2022. Questions/Inquiries should be submitted electronically via email to info@iaaqli.org and must be received by the date indicated above.

Following the question/inquiry due date, IAAQLI will compile a list of the questions/inquiries submitted by applicants. Only answers posted on Smarter Select will be considered official and valid. No applicant shall rely upon, take any action, or make any decision based upon any verbal communication.

NUL and its IAAQLI partners reserve the right to publish clarifications on information submitted in response to this RFP and to conduct discussions, either oral or written, with applicants separately or in groups. These discussions could include requests for additional information, requests for cost information or technical requirements, response attachment revisions, etc. Additionally, in conducting discussions, NUL and its IAAQLI partners may use information derived from the responses submitted by competing applicants, making reasonable efforts to preserve the identity of applicants when communicating with others.
Neither NUL, its IAAQLI partners, nor any of their representatives shall be liable for any expenses incurred in connection with the preparation of a response to this RFP. Applicants understand that this RFP does not constitute an offer to enter into an agreement or a contract between any applicant and NUL, or any of their IAAQLI partners.

For all rounds of funding, the IAAQLI Management Team, in partnership with the National Urban League, the Indianapolis Urban League and the African American Coalition of Indianapolis, has the option to transfer dollars within or across its strategies. The total dollar amount allocated for the five issue areas will not change.

This document is for information purposes only. All applicants are required to complete a full application to be considered for funding. Eligible applicants are invited to apply through the Smarter Select grants management system available on at www.iaaqli.org.

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4 Turner, B. (Sep. 9, 2021). Indiana’s small, Black farmers struggle to keep their farms running.” PBS Newshour.
5 Ibid.
8 https://foodprint.org/issues/food-justice/