



IAAQLI LAUNCHES FINAL \$29 MILLION FUNDING ROUND TO EMPOWER BLACK COMMUNITIES IN INDIANAPOLIS

Writer: Dennis Jarrett

The Indianapolis African American Quality of Life Initiative (IAAQLI) has officially announced its fourth and final round of funding—a \$29 million investment into organizations serving the city’s Black community. This latest round is part of the transformational \$100 million grant allocation made by Lilly Endowment Inc.

“This final round is both a capstone and a call to action,” said Dr. Karlin Tichenor, Director of Operations for IAAQLI. “It’s a chance to sustain the progress we’ve made and invest in organizations that are committed to building long-term solutions in our communities.”

The funding is aimed at 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations serving the African American population in Marion County. Preference will be given to Black-led and Black-serving entities, though all eligible nonprofits that demonstrate a sustained commitment to equity and impact may apply.

Grants will be awarded across six strategic pillars that address social

determinants of health:

- **Business and Entrepreneurship**
- **Education**
- **Employment**
- **Health and Wellness**
- **Leadership and Civic Engagement**
- **Housing and Homeownership**

Two types of proposals will be considered: open applications and invited proposals. The latter category is reserved for organizations that have demonstrated significant capacity and a track record of success, either through past IAAQLI grants or long-standing community impact.

“Some groups will be invited because they’re ready to move the moment funding is awarded,”

explained Willis Bright, Co-Director of IAAQLI and Chair of the African American Coalition of Indianapolis. “These are projects with systemic potential—big ideas that can transform the landscape.”

Past funding rounds have already created visible change. From expanded access to affordable housing and job training programs to youth education initiatives and health equity projects, the results are tangible. Notably, IAAQLI-supported organizations have helped local residents access jobs paying at least \$18/hour, launched technical training programs, and enhanced leadership development across the nonprofit sector.

Two such efforts include Judah Ministries, which launched a multi-tiered initiative to support families and youth in Indianapolis. Through mentoring, food distribution, educational support, and spiritual guidance, Judah has become a trusted anchor in the community, directly addressing poverty and trauma. Meanwhile, Indy Biz Pass has empowered hundreds of Black

entrepreneurs by giving them free access to professional services, coworking spaces, marketing resources, and a citywide support network designed to remove common business barriers and accelerate growth.

“One of the most exciting impacts has been the increase in collaboration,” said Dr. Tichenor. “Nonprofits are working together in ways we haven’t seen before, and the ecosystem is stronger for it.”

Another key outcome has been growth in nonprofit infrastructure and leadership capacity—helping organizations not only serve more people but also sustain and scale their missions.

Applications for the final round

are due in August, with funding expected to be awarded in October 2025. Projects must be completed by 2027, as IAAQLI concludes its timeline under a special extension to 2028.

“This initiative was never meant to last forever,” Bright said. “But we hope the impact will. We’ve tried to be good stewards of this rare and powerful opportunity.”

Organizations interested in applying are encouraged to visit the official IAAQLI website to review the Request for Proposals (RFP), eligibility guidelines, and FAQs. Dr. Tichenor calls the initiative “a living example of what’s possible when funding is aligned with community vision.” He adds, “This isn’t just about dollars. It’s about

legacy. It’s about proving that when you invest in Black communities—intentionally and boldly—you see results.”

For application details and proposal guidelines, visit: www.iaaqli.org.

“This isn’t just about dollars. It’s about legacy.”

– Dr. Karlin Tichenor



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