



INDIANAPOLIS AFRICAN AMERICAN QUALITY OF LIFE INITIATIVE

Request for Proposal

# Indianapolis African American Quality of Life Initiative For Health and Wellness

Advancing Black Maternal and Male Mental Health for Community  
Healing and Equity

**Issued:**

July 7, 2025

**Responses Due:**

August 11, 2025

11:59 pm (Eastern Time)

For Submission Requirements, see [www.iaaqli.org](http://www.iaaqli.org)



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## Introduction

The Indianapolis Urban League (IUL), with support and in partnership with the 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 six priority issue areas that affect the quality of life of African Americans in Indianapolis: Business & Entrepreneurship, Education, Employment, Health and Wellness, Housing and Homeownership, and Leadership and Civic Engagement. This Request for Proposal addresses the issue of **Health and Wellness**.

IAAQLI invites eligible applicants to submit projects or programs that address strategies to reduce health disparities and improve racial equity, with a specific focus on addressing stigma and enhancing access to and services for mental health for Black residents.

## Funding Overview

IAAQLI is pleased to announce the availability of **\$925,000** in funding to support innovative, community-centered projects that advance health equity for African American residents of Indianapolis and Marion County. This funding opportunity is designed to improve access to culturally responsive care, reduce stigma, and support the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of Black families and individuals.

Eligible applicants are invited to submit proposals that align with IAAQLI's strategic priorities in health and wellness, with a focus on Maternal Health and Child Wellness and Male Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being. Individual projects may request funding of up to \$250,000, with a minimum grant allocation of \$100,000 for a defined grant period.

Funding requests may vary in size, with individual grants awarded based on the scope, scale, and alignment of proposed activities with IAAQLI's broader mission to advance racial equity and improve the quality of life for African Americans in Indianapolis.



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## Background and Purpose

African American communities in Indianapolis continue to face deep-rooted health inequities, particularly in the areas of maternal health and mental wellness. For Black women, the perinatal and postpartum periods are marked by disproportionate rates of depression, anxiety, and trauma, compounded by limited access to culturally competent maternal mental health care. Challenges such as stigma, inadequate healthcare navigation, and underrepresentation in the healthcare workforce further exacerbate these risks.

At the same time, Black men and boys experience unique mental health challenges shaped by systemic racism, cultural stigma around vulnerability, and insufficient emotional support structures. Emotional suppression, unaddressed trauma, and limited engagement with mental health services contribute to cycles of distress that impact individuals, families, and communities.

Recent data from the Indiana Department of Health highlights alarming disparities: African American women in Marion County are more likely to experience postpartum complications and infant loss, while Black men face elevated risks of untreated mental health conditions and stress-related chronic illnesses.

To address these pressing issues, IAAQLI is prioritizing targeted investments in maternal health and child wellness, as well as male emotional well-being and mental health. This initiative seeks to reduce systemic barriers, expand access to culturally responsive care, and support holistic approaches that affirm the unique wellness needs of Black mothers, children, and men. Through community-based partnerships, mental health education, and advocacy, the IAAQLI is committed to advancing health equity and emotional healing for generations to come.



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## Objectives

The primary objective of this funding opportunity is to advance health equity for African American families in Marion County by improving access to culturally responsive mental health services and strengthening emotional well-being across generations. Proposals should support holistic approaches to maternal and male mental health rooted in community voice, cultural competence, and long-term impact.

Proposals should address one or both of the following strategic priorities:

1. **Improve Maternal Health and Child Wellness** by expanding access to maternal mental health services, addressing perinatal and postpartum challenges, and supporting the overall well-being of African American mothers and their children, particularly in underserved communities.
2. **Support Male Mental Health and Emotional Wellness** by developing culturally relevant strategies that promote emotional literacy, reduce stigma, and increase access to mental health services and peer-based support for African American boys and men.

This initiative aims to reduce systemic disparities in mental health care, promote healing and resilience, and strengthen community-led pathways to emotional wellness.

## Strategies

Applicants must address one or more of the following strategies and their key actions:

### Strategy 1: Maternal Health and Child Wellness

**Purpose:** *Support culturally responsive approaches that enhance the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of African American mothers and children by expanding access to care, strengthening support systems, and promoting wellness education to address health disparities.*

### Key Actions

1. **Specialized Maternal Mental Health Services:**
  - Develop targeted mental health programs for expecting and new mothers, including support for perinatal mood and anxiety disorders.
  - Address postpartum depression, maternal stress, and trauma-related care through culturally competent interventions.
2. **Accessible Counseling and Peer Support**



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- Establish affordable, community-based counseling services.
- Establish mother-to-mother peer support networks to alleviate isolation and foster mental and emotional well-being.

### **3. Child Wellness and Early Development**

- Integrate maternal and child health services, with a focus on nutrition, bonding, and early developmental screenings.
- Offer parenting education and stress-reduction tools that strengthen maternal-infant attachment.

### **4. Holistic Family Wellness Education**

- Provide workshops and digital tools that support maternal self-care, nutrition, mindfulness, and stress management.
- Promote health literacy around maternity and child well-being using culturally responsive models.

## **Strategy 2: Male Mental Health and Emotional Wellness**

**Purpose:** *Support culturally responsive initiatives that promote the emotional well-being of African American boys and men by reducing stigma, addressing trauma, expanding access to care, and fostering emotional literacy, mentorship, and leadership in mental health advocacy.*

### **Key Actions**

#### **1. Culturally Responsive Mental Health Programs for Men**

- Develop programming tailored to African American boys and men that addresses stigma, trauma, and emotional suppression.
- Offer therapeutic services designed to address anger, depression, anxiety, and identity development.

#### **2. Peer and Mentorship Support Models**

- Establish peer mentorship circles or group therapy models that foster vulnerability, brotherhood, and healing.
- Engage trained facilitators who can model and teach emotional intelligence and healthy coping.

#### **3. Emotional Literacy and Well-Being Education**



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- Deliver workshops and media content focused on emotional vocabulary, stress relief, and the connection between mental health and overall life outcomes.
- Integrate mental wellness into male-centered spaces, including barbershops, schools, and reentry programs.

#### **4. Workforce and Community Leadership Development**

- Equip Black mental health professionals and community leaders with training that expands culturally relevant access to care and strengthens community-based support systems.
- Develop pathways for Black men to become mental health advocates and peer navigators within their communities, fostering vulnerability, trust and engagement.
- Establish and strengthen pipelines to increase Black representation in the mental health workforce and support the retention and professional development of existing practitioners who serve Black communities.

### **Expected Outcomes**

#### **1. Enhanced Maternal Health and Child Wellness**

- Increased access to maternal mental health resources.
- Reduction in postpartum depression symptoms and improvement in mother-child bonding.
- Strengthened family support systems and child developmental outcomes.

#### **2. Strengthened Male Emotional Health**

- Increased engagement of men and boys in mental health and emotional wellness programs.
- Reduced stigma and greater acceptance of emotional vulnerability among Black males.
- Enhanced emotional literacy, coping skills, and community support structures for men.

#### **3. Culturally Competent Workforce Development**

- Expanded community trust and participation in mental health services due to culturally relevant approaches.



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- Increased representation of African Americans in mental and maternal health professions.

**Important Considerations for Applicants:** IAAQLI funding in this category is designed to improve the overall mental health of Black residents across the lifespan (early childhood to senior citizens). Priority will be given to organizations represented in the following areas:

Demonstrates cultural competency in addressing the mental health needs of African Americans.

- 1) Ability to provide information about accessing clinical mental health services (community, school, or residential).
- 2) Demonstrates a commitment to African American populations (children, youth, and adults) presented by continued services and programs
- 3) Demonstrates a commitment to developing partnerships between clinical mental health service providers and local community organizations such as churches, social service agencies, and local impact services.

**Use of Funding:** Use of funding may include staffing, direct educational services, ecosystem databases, training and professional development, and curation of resources and services. Priority will be given to organizations able to articulate a clearly articulated sustainability plan to continue and scale services for long-term impact and positive outcomes for Black residents.

## Eligibility Requirements

Eligible organizations are encouraged to submit a response to this RFP in accordance with the guidelines outlined below. Include all required sections with your response. Incomplete documents will not receive consideration.

This RFP is open to organizations classified as public charities under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, including nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, workforce development agencies, healthcare providers, and community-based organizations. Preference will be given to African American-led organizations that are rooted in and actively serve African American communities in Marion County, Indiana.

Applicants may apply individually or in collaboration with other entities. If applying as part of a partnership or consortium, proposals must include signed letters of support from each collaborating organization. These letters should clearly outline the collaborator's role in the proposed project, relevant expertise or experience, and specific contributions to program implementation. While partnering organizations are not required to be African



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American-led or not-for-profit organizations, preference will be given to those based in Indiana, particularly those located in Indianapolis.

In addition to meeting eligibility requirements, applicants are strongly encouraged to include a clear plan for measurable milestones, outcome reporting, and the use of collaborative project or program teams. Proposals that demonstrate a structured approach to evaluation and cross-sector collaboration will receive priority consideration during the review process.

## Additional Eligibility Considerations

For funding opportunities related to health and wellness, additional consideration will be given to organizations that demonstrate proven success in mental health services, healthcare advocacy, or community violence prevention; experience working with African American populations in Indianapolis; capacity to implement evidence-based and scalable programs; and a strong commitment to culturally responsive practices that address the social determinants of health.

## Elements of Proposal

### I. Application Requirements

1. The application form is available online at <https://app.smarterselect.com/programs/103798-laaqli>.
2. All applications will be reviewed and screened by IUL, NUL, 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, Certificate of Insurance (COI), and clear identification of the IAAQLI strategy your organization plans to address, and adherence to other program requirements.

### II. IAAQLI Grant Application

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

1. 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).
2. A detailed project budget to accompany the applicant's grant request material. The budget must be completed on the IAAQLI Budget Template.





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3. A description of how the project/program activities will meet the eligibility criteria of the proposed funding strategy.
4. A description of the project/program team and the management structure for the project/program; a description of the organization's leadership and staffing.
5. How the project/program will address the gaps for African American residents and how it will contribute towards the achievement of the application'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 the proposed funding strategy. If your project/program includes collaborations with other organizations, please also describe their role, track record, experience, and expertise).*
6. Key activities you will undertake in this project/program and the proposed length of the project/program.
7. Describe how the applying organization plans to continue offering this program/project/operational activity after exhausting IAAQLI funding.
8. A statement of Revenue and Expenses for the organization's most recently completed fiscal year.
9. 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 time.
2. Subgrant Agreements are sent to funded organizations and must be signed by an officer of the organization and returned by the due date indicated.
3. Funds are delivered after award approval, setup of the organization profile in the Build Back Black Portal, and receipt of a signed Subgrant Agreement.
4. 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 Subgrant 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 future funding until those reports are made current.



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## Selection & Evaluation Process

Each submitted application will be reviewed by a team of evaluators. An IAAQLI staff representative will oversee the application evaluation process. Each application 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 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.
- **Sustainability:** The extent to which the organization demonstrates a clear plan for sustaining the proposed project beyond the grant period, including diversified funding strategies, long-term partnerships, and/or earned revenue models.
- **Impact:** The degree to which the proposed project is likely to generate measurable impact for Black residents and communities, particularly in areas of economic mobility, access to opportunity, and reduction of structural barriers.
- **Innovation and Responsiveness:** The ability of the organization to propose creative, data-informed, and community-responsive approaches that address emerging needs or longstanding gaps in the employment, education, or economic ecosystem.
- **Evaluation and Learning:** The extent to which the applicant presents a clear and coherent plan for evaluating project implementation, including defined success metrics, data collection methods, and strategies for tracking outcomes over time.



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## Anticipated RFP Timeline

RFP Date of Issue	July 7, 2025
Written Questions from Q&A session Due to Email: <a href="mailto:info@iaaqli.org">info@iaaqli.org</a>	July 14, 2025
IUL Posts Answers to Questions	July 21, 2025
RFP Proposals Due to Smarter Select	August 11, 2025
Anticipated Proposal Awards	October 10, 2025

## Questions and Inquiry Process

All questions and inquiries regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing by the deadline. Questions or inquiries should be submitted electronically via email to [info@iaaqli.org](mailto: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 and 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.



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*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 at [www.iaaqli.org](http://www.iaaqli.org).**