



INDIANAPOLIS AFRICAN AMERICAN QUALITY OF LIFE INITIATIVE

Request for Proposal

Indianapolis African American Quality of Life Initiative For Leadership and Civic Engagement

Building Leadership, Enhancing Participation in Civic Life, and
Strengthening Community Service Infrastructures

Issued:

July 7, 2025

Responses Due:

August 11, 2025

11:59 pm (Eastern Time)

For Submission Requirements see www.iaaqli.org



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Introduction

The Indianapolis Urban League (IUL), in partnership with the National Urban League (NUL), the African American Coalition of Indianapolis (AACI), community organizations, corporations, foundations, faith-based groups, public agencies, and other stakeholders, is implementing the Indianapolis African American Quality of Life Initiative (IAAQLI). Funded through a \$100 million grant from Lilly Endowment, IAAQLI aims to improve the quality of life for Black and African American residents in Indianapolis and Marion County by promoting leadership, civic engagement, and community development.

IAAQLI focuses on six priority areas: Business & Entrepreneurship, Education, Employment, Health and Wellness, Housing and Homeownership, and Leadership and Civic Engagement. This Request for Proposal (RFP) specifically addresses the **Leadership and Civic Engagement** priority, inviting eligible organizations to propose initiatives that strengthen civic engagement, public policy participation, leadership development, advocacy, and philanthropic infrastructure within the African American community.

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.

Funding Overview

IAAQLI is pleased to announce the availability of **\$2,500,000** in funding to support innovative, community-centered projects that strengthen Black philanthropic leadership and build the capacity of Black-led and Black-serving nonprofit organizations in Indianapolis and Marion County. This funding opportunity is designed to promote a more inclusive and professional philanthropic sector by advancing community-driven giving, leadership development, and organizational sustainability.

Eligible applicants are invited to submit proposals that align with IAAQLI's strategic priorities in nonprofit infrastructure, capacity building, and Black philanthropic advancement. Individual projects may request funding of **up to \$250,000** for the defined grant period.

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Background and Purpose

African American youth, emerging leaders, and community-based organizations in Indianapolis continue to face systemic barriers that hinder their ability to lead, influence, and sustain change across civic, public, and nonprofit sectors. Despite a rich legacy of mutual aid, faith-based leadership, and community organizing, Black residents remain significantly underrepresented in decision-making roles. These disparities are perpetuated by limited access to culturally grounded leadership training, professional development, mentorship, and pathways to public service.

Current challenges include underrepresentation in leadership positions, lack of visible role models, gaps in civic education, and limited exposure to career pathways in nonprofit management, governance, and public administration. Structural obstacles such as economic insecurity, transportation barriers, and insufficient civic infrastructure restrict participation in community leadership and diminish opportunities for African Americans to influence systems that directly impact their lives.

Without targeted investment in leadership development, civic education, and organizational capacity-building, strategies risk being disconnected from lived experience and under-resourced to deliver meaningful change. This lack of representation not only stifles the leadership potential of individuals but also weakens civic participation, limits policy influence, and undermines equity-focused decision-making within institutions.

This initiative seeks to address these disparities by expanding the pipeline of Black leaders through comprehensive leadership development, mentorship, and civic engagement programs. By equipping youth, young adults, and mid-career professionals with the knowledge, skills, and networks necessary to lead effectively, the program will strengthen Black representation across sectors and reinvigorate community-based leadership. It will also elevate African American civic contributions and restore the traditions of advocacy, self-determination, and collective leadership that have long sustained Black communities in Indianapolis and across the African diaspora.

Through this investment, we aim to cultivate a new generation of Black leaders who are equipped to drive equitable systems change, lead resilient organizations, and advance justice, equity, and community power for generations to come.



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Objectives

The primary objective of this funding opportunity is to strengthen Black philanthropic leadership and nonprofit infrastructure in Indianapolis by investing in intergenerational leadership development, operational capacity, and culturally rooted models of giving. Programs that engage youth, young adults, and mid-career professionals in coordinated, sustainable leadership pipelines will receive priority consideration.

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

1. **Strengthen Black Philanthropic Institutions** by supporting the development, sustainability, and professionalism of Black-led philanthropic entities, including community-based funds, family and faith-based giving models, and partnerships with established foundations.
2. **Build Leadership and Administrative Capacity** by investing in training, strategic planning, and technical assistance for Black-created philanthropies and nonprofit organizations.
3. **Expand Philanthropic Education and Training** by offering culturally responsive learning opportunities for youth and adults on grants management, nonprofit governance, and community-based philanthropy.
4. **Develop Workforce Pathways in Philanthropy** through internships, fellowships, and professional development opportunities that prepare emerging Black leaders for careers in the philanthropic sector.

This initiative aims to foster a more inclusive, community-driven philanthropic ecosystem that supports racial equity, sustainable leadership, and the long-term vitality of Black-led institutions.

Strategies

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

Strategy 1: Comprehensive Leadership Development for Black/African American Youth

Purpose: *Cultivate leadership skills and civic responsibility among Black/African American youth.*



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Key Actions

- Implement leadership training programs that provide skill development and real-world leadership experiences.
- Establish structured programs for youth and young adults to take leadership roles in school and community organizations and initiatives.
- Establish programs that allow youth to research Black/African American leaders, study their social change tactics, and design their social change projects to address a community issue.
- Provide young leaders mentorship and collaborative experiences with Black/African American adults.
- Develop conflict resolution, relationship-building, and coalition-forming skills to strengthen youth, mixed-age, and overall community leadership development.
- Implement peer-led initiatives to address youth-defined issues, such as violence prevention, male-female relationships, career internships, and/or community advocacy related to a youth, family, or community concern.

Strategy 2: Expanding Civic Engagement and Public Policy Participation

Purpose: *Increase African American participation in civic activities and public decision-making processes.*

Key Actions

- Develop initiatives that encourage civic participation, including voting education, community organizing, and public service projects.
- Provide educational workshops on civic responsibility, political processes, and social advocacy.
- Establish mentorship programs connecting youth and adults with experienced civic leaders and policymakers.
- Provide direction for project participants to design their social change project or to strategically affiliate with an existing group to implement their priority agenda.
- Develop conflict resolution, relationship-building, and coalition-forming skills to strengthen community leadership.
- Encourage community-based projects that foster dialogue, coalition building, and resource sharing.



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Strategy 3: Strengthening the Pathway to Public Service, Philanthropy, and the Effect Management of Black Led Community Organizations

Purpose: *Support African Americans in pursuing careers and management and program knowledge in non-profit management, employment in public service and philanthropy, and the governance of non-profit and philanthropic institutions.*

Key Actions

- Offer training on policy and program development, governance structures, and effective advocacy strategies.
- Facilitate internships, fellowships, staffing and shadowing opportunities within local government, public administration, and philanthropic institutions.
- Educate individuals on fundraising, grant writing, and nonprofit management to build sustainable community-based initiatives.
- Create professional development opportunities for mid-career professionals, enhancing their capacity to assume leadership roles in nonprofit, corporate, and public sectors.
- Provide a pathway to employment and offer additional professional development or certification opportunities.
- Facilitation of board and staff training in all aspects of not-for-profit development, program design and implementation, financing, and evaluation.

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



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program implementation. While partnering organizations are not required to be African 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.

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.
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



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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 the IAAQLI.

Procedure for Prospective Grant Applicants

1. Applicants must submit responses to this RFP online by the date indicated.
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 scheduled 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 building strong non-profit organizations, leadership development, and efforts to establish peaceful interaction between African Americans 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 a 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: info@iaaqli.org	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/inquiries regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing by the deadline of July 14, 2025. Questions or 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 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.