



IAAQLI ANNOUNCES FINAL ROUND OF FUNDING, MARKING A MAJOR MILESTONE FOR BLACK QUALITY OF LIFE IN INDIANAPOLIS

Writer: Dennis Jarrett

Earlier this month, the Indianapolis African American Quality of Life Initiative (IAAQLI) announced its fourth and final round of grant funding, awarding \$29 million to organizations serving the city’s Black community. Final-round awards went to nonprofits advancing the initiative’s six priority pillars: education, health and wellness, housing and homeownership, employment, Black business development, and leadership engagement.

The initiative was made possible through a historic \$100 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc., administered by the Indianapolis Urban League and the African American Coalition of Indianapolis and has supported over 150 local organizations since its launch in 2022.

A Transformational Local Impact

IAAQLI funding has produced visible, documented outcomes across Indianapolis. Early learning centers



have expanded capacity and added culturally responsive curriculum. Programs preserving and teaching Black history—including museum exhibits, cultural archives, and youth heritage experiences—have grown significantly. Food justice work has increased access to fresh produce through mobile markets, community gardens, and neighborhood distribution hubs.

On the housing front, multiple grantees have renovated aging homes for seniors, supported first-time homebuyers, and advanced affordable housing development in historically Black neighborhoods. Employment-focused organizations have launched or expanded job-readiness pipelines, commercial driver’s license (CDL) training, advanced manufacturing apprenticeships, health-care career pathways, and digital-skills certifications tied directly to jobs with living wages.

Mental-health grantees have built out no-cost therapy services, youth trauma programs, school-based counseling, peer-support groups, and culturally responsive clinical training.

Reflecting on the breadth of this work, IAAQLI Co-Director Willis Bright emphasized both the urgency and the promise of the initiative:

“With both the directed and unintended consequences of current public policy and funding priorities, the early learning education,

Black history, and food programs provided by IAAQLI grantees will be essential. The affordable housing and employment training linked to careers and jobs with livable wages and benefits will be life-changing for many. With the pressures and trauma experienced by almost everyone, the mental-health services provided for people of all ages are life-preserving and changing for so many. Our grantees are truly making a difference in the quality of life for individuals, families, and neighborhoods.”

Leadership Voices on the Meaning of the Final Round

IAAQLI Co-Director and Indianapolis Urban League President Tony Mason noted the lasting impact the initiative is having:

“This final round of funding gives us a chance to build on powerful work that’s already underway in our city. We have to put the resources and partnerships in place to shift longstanding disparities in employment, education, and economic mobility for Black residents.”

With this last distribution of funds, IAAQLI closes its grantmaking phase, but the work it has enabled—across classrooms, clinics, neighborhoods, and businesses—continues to take root and transform the quality of life for African Americans in Indianapolis.