



BLACK EMPOWERMENT WORKS CLASS TWO

(2021-2022)

Year-End Report

www.uwgc.org/bew



United Way
of Greater Cincinnati



BLACK EMPOWERMENT WORKS

PROMOTES BLACK SELF-DETERMINATION, SOCIAL MOBILITY AND ECONOMIC PROSPERITY BY PROVIDING RESOURCES AND FUNDING TO COMMUNITY-BASED, BLACK-LED WORK.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



Friends,

In 2022, United Way of Greater Cincinnati shared its commitment to systems change: tackling deep-rooted problems that hold families back and building solutions that ensure economic well-being for all. This work is complex and it will take all of us.

In 2020, we launched Black Empowerment Works, an equity-focused grant program designed by a group of passionate community volunteers. The “why” was simple: We believe those most affected by a challenge must be involved in designing the solution. In our region, there is an over-representation of Black families experiencing poverty and an underinvestment in community-based, Black-led work to address it. We are compelled to change that.

But this work and all our work is about more than just closing gaps. It’s about daring to imagine new, more equitable futures. It’s about the power to shape new narratives.

Closing out our second round of Black Empowerment Works funding in 2022, we are inspired by the 45 impactful projects and organizations we supported. From creating space for healing and restoration to supporting seniors to navigate a more digital world, these changemakers exemplify the bright spots in our community.

I hope you enjoy reading more about the progress of this work. We are excited for the future.

Moira Weir

President & CEO

United Way of Greater Cincinnati

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THROUGH BLACK EMPOWERMENT WORKS, WE IMPLEMENT PRACTICES THAT PRIORITIZE COMMUNITY AND RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING.

1 POWER IN THE HANDS OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Community volunteers work together to make investment decisions. We provide training and resources to support them along the way. Changemakers define what success means for their work, rather than us defining success for them.

2 OPEN OPPORTUNITY, STREAMLINED PROCESS

We honor that impact work comes in various structures. We invest in the work of nonprofits, for-profit social enterprises, community coalitions and individuals. We aim to ask only for what's necessary to make decisions and provide the opportunity for applicants to share more about their work beyond a written application.

3 SUPPORT BEYOND THE GRANT

While grant funding is a critical resource provided to changemakers, we are committed to going beyond by providing coaching and resources to build their work in the ways they see fit. This includes regular check-ins, advice on strategy and connections to other funders and resources.

4 FOSTERING A COMMUNITY OF COLLABORATIVE CHANGEMAKERS

Beyond building trust-based and authentic relationships with each of the changemakers, we aim to facilitate (and provide resources for) collaboration among the class of grantees. We believe in the collective wisdom of the group.

HERE'S WHAT A FEW OF THE CLASS TWO GRANTEES HAD TO SAY:



"The BEW (grant) gave me the resources, platform, space and time to bring my idea to life."

Alexander Shelton, Alexander Shelton Yoga



"When people/organizations hear 'funded by United Way/ Black Empowerment Works', they are a lot more willing to listen, believe and give! They are confident that the business and mission are legit and beneficial for the community."

Leah Steverson, Blue Skyy Therapeutic Services



"As a newly formed organization stepping out on blind faith, the (Black Empowerment Works grant) made the difference."

Dedra Porter, L.A.L.A. Nonprofit Org



"As a small organization with very little history, backing from (Black Empowerment Works) provided us with legitimacy that opened doors to potential partners and other funding. The access (it created) allowed us to consult with a graphic designer and construct a website."

Josselyn Okorodudu, Our Tribe



"We are truly grateful that (Black Empowerment Works) believed (in our work) to change the lives of so many young girls. Without this funding we would be left up a creek without a paddle."

Kimberly Huckleby, Ladies of Leadership

COMMITTED COMMUNITY MEMBERS MAKE THE BEST DECISION-MAKERS.

Black Empowerment Works celebrates and engages the expertise within our communities from the very start of the process. Volunteers read all the applications and make the investment decisions.



"I think this opportunity provided unique and exceptional networking opportunity to connect with other reviewers... Not to mention a great personal and professional development opportunity for us as reviewers."

Diamond Brown, 2021 Reviewer



"It not only helped a community I care about but helped bring light to the crucial role the under-recognized entrepreneurs in the city play to help it grow and develop."

Garrison Mays, 2021 Reviewer

We extend our gratitude to the 38 community members who raised their hands for the difficult task of selecting the grantees among a pool of 168 applicants. They each volunteered approximately 30 hours over a two-month period, including training and working with a small group to review a subset of applications and hold conversations with applicants. They embody what it means to Live United.

Thank you to this year's grant reviewers:

Abby Beausir	Charmay Jones	Anita Smith
Jueisha Boykin	Ashley Kinamore	Crystal Smith
Robyn Brands	Jill Kohrs	Jazmin Smith
Diamon Brown	Chris Macklin	Kimberly Smith
Alexandra Cureton	Garrison Mays	Leah Stayton
Sandi Carter	Brice Mickey	Tamara Thrasher
Dominique Ellison	Ewaniki Moore-Hawkins	Dominique Walker
Edwina Hairston	Jazmine Mosby	Ihsan Walker
Anita Harney	Delisha Murray	Nita Walker
Buford (Jack) Harvey	Flora Popenoe	Olaisha Wallace
Kimberly Huckleby	Mary Reid	Natalia Weekly
Tasha Johnson	Andi Saylor	Taylor Welch
	Ashley Simpson	Tatiana Zenni

Interested in being a community reviewer?



VISIT US

at www.uwgc.org/bewapply to learn more.



BLACK EMPOWERMENT WORKS CLASS TWO GRANTEES

Academy for Technologists Extraordinaire Inc.
Agricademy Inc.
Alexander Shelton Yoga
Blue Sky Therapeutic Services LLC
Breastfeeding Outreach for Our Breastfeeding Sisters – BOOBS
CHIPS – Citywide Hamilton Internship Program
Cincinnati Music Accelerator
Cincinnati Parent Empowerment Network
Connecting for Impact
DevonshireSmith Diversity and Education Solutions
Diasporic Soul
Easley Blessed Foundation
East Westwood Improvement Association
Elementz Cultural Art Center
Filling the Gap
Forever Kings Inc.
Gameplan
Gateway to Grace Foundation
High Achievers Aim High
Hyperfarm
iCan Health
Jamaa Health
Jurisdiction-wide Resident Advisory Board (J-RAB Inc.)

Ladies of Leadership LLC
Leave A Legacy Always (L.A.L.A) Nonprofit Org
Madisonville Mission Ministries
Me&She Doula Services, LLC
MENTors
Miller's Karate Studios
MY KIDZ
Opportunities Peoples Justice Leaders
Option Plus Social Service Pantry
Our Tribe
People's Initiative Network
Q-KIDZ Dance Team
Queen City Foundation
Queen Mother's Market
Serving Older Adults through Changing Times
Sweet Sistah Splash
The Green Store
Their Voice of Greater Cincinnati
Tree Essential LLC
We Shall Overcome Foundation
WiPROSPER
Youth at the Center

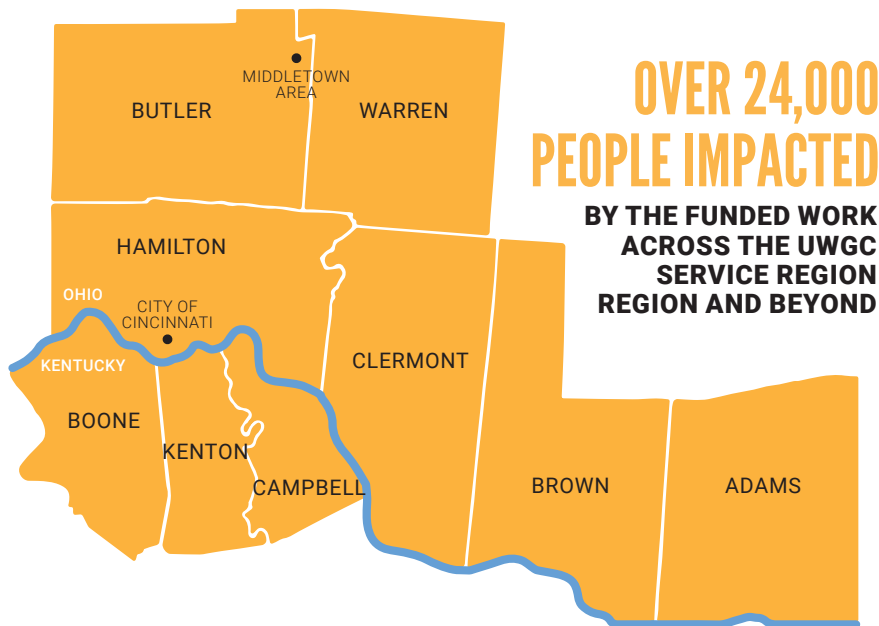


LEARN MORE

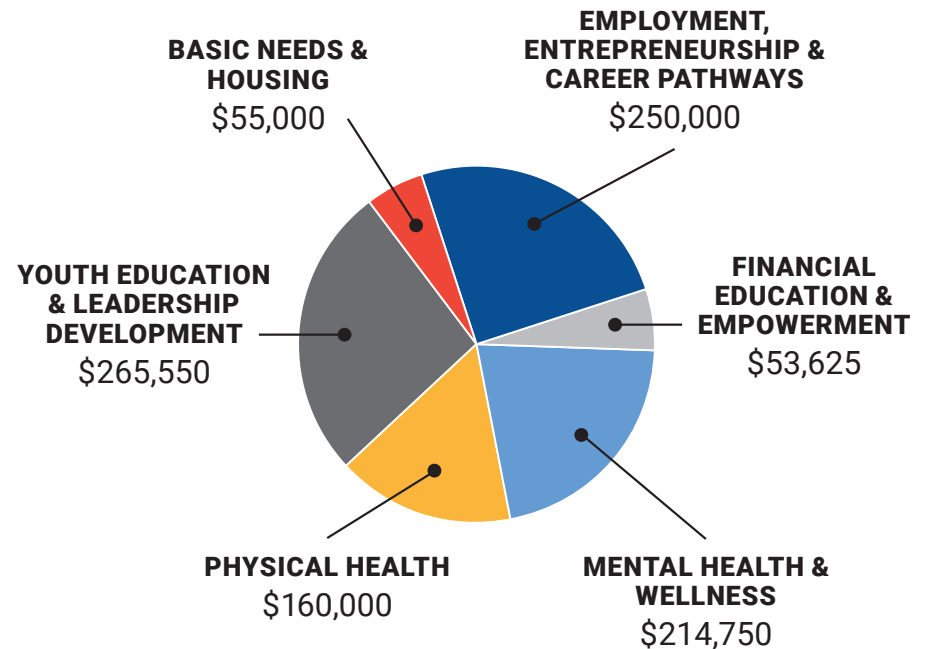
about each organization's work by visiting
www.uwgc.org/bew

BLACK EMPOWERMENT WORKS CHANGEMAKERS ARE PROVIDED WITH FUNDS TO IMPACT OUR COMMUNITY IN VARIOUS SECTORS.

COUNTIES AND CITIES SERVED BY BLACK EMPOWERMENT WORKS PROGRAMS



\$1 MILLION INVESTED ACROSS MULTIPLE FOCUS AREAS



AGE GROUPS SERVED



WITH FUNDING AND SUPPORT, BLACK EMPOWERMENT WORKS GRANTEES ACHIEVED THEIR GOALS.

92% OF GRANTEES ACHIEVED
IDENTIFIED GOALS.

45% MET OR EXCEEDED
ALL THEIR GOALS.

9,652 People gained access to basic needs resources and health education, contributing to leading healthier lives.

2,133 Young people developed skills in the areas of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics), opening up possibilities for the future.

1,120 Young people received critical mentorship and leadership development opportunities.

723 People gained access to mental health and well-being services, supporting self-care.

468 People were supported on their path toward entrepreneurship.

321 People built their knowledge of key financial empowerment concepts.

220 Parents/caregivers received appropriate prenatal and postnatal support to help their young ones thrive.

92 People were supported on their path to post-secondary education.

22 Women impacted by the criminal legal system were provided with tailored supports to help them thrive.



A SPOTLIGHT ON A FEW FUNDED ORGANIZATIONS

Diasporic Soul

Diasporic Soul used its grant funds to host “Black. Dope. All Good. Communal Healing Retreats for Black Men,” a series of sessions dedicated to restoring the connection to SOUL (culture). The connection to SOUL offers resources to deepen the capacity to heal from trauma, restore one another and build resilience and resistance.

- 48 participants across three separate sessions.
- Practices included restorative yoga, journaling, building community among one another and beholding the work of Black artists.
- Participants felt that they could be their authentic selves in this space and feel seen.



“I felt like for the first time in a long time I could unplug from hustle culture. I could just chill and sit still, feeling the sun.”

Diasporic Soul Retreat Participant

DevonshireSmith Diversity and Education Solutions

The Black Empowerment Works grant funded the Pathways to Success College Access Program, an intensive nine-month program to develop and empower high school students of color to achieve post-secondary completion. Sessions include ACT Bootcamps and college visits, covering topics such as financial aid and navigating college.

- 100% of participating seniors accepted into two or more post-secondary institutions.
- Program participants secured \$426,278 in scholarships and grants.
- 93% of participating students increased their ACT scores.



“The COVID-19 pandemic forced us to change the way we work to reach students. We shifted to a hybrid format and reached families using text messages, emails, biweekly information sessions and more.”

Michael D. Griffin, President and CEO

Serving Older Adults through Changing Times

The Tech-Savvy Seniors program equipped seniors with the technology and skills to remain connected and informed in our digital world – to their churches, entertainment, doctors’ offices, banks, families and each other.

- 325 seniors gained access and devices



“We connected seniors, giving them access to the available resources in their community while also preventing senior isolation. Our program changes a lot of lives, rekindles and creates a lot of friendships.”

Sandra Jones-Mitchell, SOACT



VISIT US

for the full list of 2021-22
Black Empowerment
Works Grantees



BLACK EMPOWERMENT WORKS GOES BEYOND THE GRANT.

We strive to contribute to an ecosystem of support that centers Black social changemakers. This includes providing resources to build their organizational capacity and connections.

90%
OF ORGANIZATIONS
REPORTED BUILDING
THEIR OVERALL CAPACITY
DURING THE GRANT YEAR.

These three resources are examples of tools available to changemakers to build their capacity.

Mobilize

Mobilize is a virtual engagement platform that enables the Black Empowerment Works community to connect across space. The platform has been used to share events, celebrate success, pose questions and build partnerships. By the conclusion of BEW Class Two, the platform had 72 active users, with one describing it as “a great resource for information about services we didn’t even know existed.”



Bengals Capacity Fund

The \$50,000 fund, made possible by the Cincinnati Bengals Positive Impact Committee, provided nonprogrammatic dollars to changemakers to grow their networks, knowledge and capacity. Uses included organizational development, expansion, conferences, systems improvements and consultation fees.



“We were able to hire an attorney for legal contract development purposes and become a certified vendor for a large company here in Cincinnati. That was HUGE for us.” – Deasa Dorsey, iCan Health

Resilia

Resilia is a technology platform that enables organizations to increase their capacity by providing technical assistance, coaching and other support. Its on-demand training, resources and coaching aid nonprofits with critical items like board development, expanding donor base, website development, fundraising, tracking data and overall strategic planning, all while protecting their digital assets. We piloted this platform with a subset of 19 grantees with success.



BY BEING A PART OF THE BLACK EMPOWERMENT WORKS COMMUNITY, CHANGEMAKERS WERE ABLE TO BUILD CONNECTIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS.

60% of grantees reported they collaborated with other funded partners.

70% of grantees who reported applying for funds beyond Black Empowerment Works were successful in receiving additional funding.

Here are just a few of the Connections and Partnerships:



Mona Jenkins of Queen Mother's Market participated in Agracademy's Black Empowerment through Agriculture program. Agracademy lends support to Queen Mother's Market in its quest to open a co-op grocery store.



Joi Sears of The Green Store worked with iCan Health to build its website.



Cincinnati Parent Empowerment Network has used its social media following to amplify the work of other Black Empowerment Works grantees, including Ladies of Leadership and Our Tribe.



With tech-oriented work, Serving Older Adults through Changing Times saw value in collaborating with Academy for Technologists Extraordinaire.



**THIS WORK IS MADE POSSIBLE THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS,
INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS AND CORPORATE PARTNERS.**

INDIVIDUAL DONORS BY THE NUMBERS

- 1,779 UNIQUE DONORS
- OVER \$400,000 CONTRIBUTED BY INDIVIDUAL DONORS
- AVERAGE GIFT SIZE: \$233.17
- RANGE OF GIFTS: \$1 TO \$10,000

A SPOTLIGHT ON OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS

P&G Always – Second-Year Investments

The P&G Always team invested \$175,000 to provide second-year funding to six 2020 Black Empowerment Works grantees. Their funds invested in majority women-led organizations supporting the next generation of women leaders.

- Agracademy
- Easley Blessed Foundation
- High Achievers Aim High
- Ladies of Leadership
- Madisonville Mission Ministries
- Q-KIDZ Dance Team

We are excited to continue to partner with P&G Always.

always

Cincinnati Bengals

In collaboration with the Cincinnati Bengals' Positive Community Impact Committee, United Way was able to launch the Black Empowerment Works Capacity Fund, providing critical nonprogrammatic dollars to Black changemakers. The committee's investment of \$50,000 funded 28 organizations to support the growth of their knowledge, networks and capacity.



WHAT WE LEARNED

- In reimagining new, equity and liberation-centric systems and communities, we must prioritize time for rest, healing and joy.
- At national, state and local levels, we need to improve and broaden access to funding, especially funding to cover operations and learning. This requires us to rethink the structure of processes and examine where and how bias shows up.
- Access to health care, especially culturally rooted mental health care, continues to emerge as an opportunity space.
- As we work to support young people on their journey to adulthood, exposure to diverse opportunities and space for creativity makes a significant difference.
- Organizations are challenged but are working diligently to find solutions to participant transportation barriers. Leaders are restructuring work to broaden access (i.e. hybrid or fully virtual) but there are costs and tradeoffs in doing this.
- Partnerships are paramount for growth. As funders, we can do more to promote partnerships rooted in abundance rather than competition. Network building is the work.

WHAT WE'RE EXCITED ABOUT

- Forging partnerships to expand access to mentorship and capacity resources.
- Learning from emerging strategies in the field to strengthen the program.
- Doing more to amplify the expertise of Black changemakers.



THANK YOU!

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