



BLACK EMPOWERMENT WORKS

2023 | COMMUNITY REVIEWER INFORMATION



United Way
of Greater Cincinnati

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WHAT IS BLACK EMPOWERMENT WORKS?

Black Empowerment Works promotes Black self-determination, social mobility and economic prosperity by providing resources and funding to grassroots/community-based, Black-led work. Since its inception in 2020, the program has invested over \$3 million in 100 ideas and their leaders.

This work exists for two reasons:

1. There is an over-representation of Black families experiencing poverty and an underinvestment in community-based, Black-led work and expertise to address it.
2. We are compelled to hold spaces and provide resources to imagine and bring to life unencumbered, self-determined Black futures.

More than just a grant fund, Black Empowerment Works seeks to contribute to the ecosystem of support for Black changemakers. We provide access to capacity-building resources, opportunities for partnership, access to a shared workspace and more.

This year, in partnership with bi3 and P&G Always brand, we are positioned to invest \$1.6 million and engage more than 40 community members to make those investment decisions. Applicants can apply for up to \$40,000, with the grants being renewable contingent upon performance and funds available. Applicants may submit only one application per year.

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING TO FUND?

We seek to fund Black-led work focused on building solutions and/or aligning systems to help families in our community thrive, with an intentional focus on supporting Black families. This grant opportunity is open to nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations, for-profit social enterprises, community coalitions and individuals whose work meets our eligibility requirements.

Applicants may submit only one application per year, with request amounts ranging from \$4,000 to \$40,000.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be considered for funding, applying organizations/individuals and their work must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- **Geography:** Located and providing services within the UWGC nine-county service region (Hamilton, Clermont, and Brown counties in Ohio; Boone, Campbell, Grant, and Kenton counties in Kentucky; Dearborn and Ohio counties in Indiana).
- **Black Leadership and Labor:** At least 60% of the leaders of the work (those empowered to make decisions on behalf of the group) identify as Black. The work has an intentional (though not necessarily exclusive) focus on advancing the well-being of Black people.
- **Grassroots/Community-Based:** Community members, especially those directly or indirectly impacted by the focus of your work, have and continue to shape the work you do. Example: staff leading this work have direct experiences with the challenges your work seeks to overcome.
- **Community Benefit:** The work benefits the community rather than benefitting any private individual, group or business. The work has a focus on individuals, families and/or communities with limited access to resources.
- **Actionable:** The work is far enough along in development or execution that if provided funding, it could produce measurable results by September 2024.

WHAT WON'T WE FUND?

While we aim to make this program accessible to a variety of different organizational structures and work, we do have some restrictions around funding. Funding cannot be used for the following purposes:

- General business operating support. This is not a traditional small-business grant. Applications must demonstrate a community benefit, aligned to one of the focus areas and beyond a benefit provided to employees and stakeholders of the business.
- Capital campaigns (a targeted fundraising effort to raise a large amount of money in a specific timeframe for a large project, like securing or developing a property)
- Political campaigns or partisan political work
- Debt reduction or work occurring prior to the grant period.
- Work occurring outside of the UWGC nine-county service region.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A REVIEWER?

We believe those closest to any opportunity or challenge are closest to the solution. This belief is foundational to the Black Empowerment Works program, both in terms of who receives investment and who has the power to make the investment decisions. Community Reviewers are community members who are passionate about and invested in Black futures. They work collaboratively to decide what work gets funded each grant cycle.

Community Reviewers will work in small teams of three to five, evaluating a subset of the applications submitted. Through written application reviews and conversations with grant applicants, they will work to identify applicants in their pool they wish to fund. Final funding decisions will be made following the assessment of information collected from all review teams.

Beyond believing in the mission of Black Empowerment Works, reviewers are expected to:

- Make the best decisions with the information they have, addressing bias as it shows up.
- Be knowledgeable of the grant criteria.
- Maintain the highest level of confidentiality regarding applicant information, disclosing any conflicts of interest.

WHAT QUALITIES MAKE A GOOD REVIEWER?

We seek to bring together a diverse and engaged reviewer panel with representation across age, race/ethnicity, gender, geography, experience and perspective. No prior experience is required! All reviewers will receive training to prepare for the opportunity.

In general, we are looking for people who are:

- Active listeners, empathetic and relatable.
- Active in their communities (however you define them, and preferably in support of Black people).
- Passionate about and/or connected to the mission of advancing the well-being of Black people.
- Able to commit to fully participating in the process, including attending and completing trainings, application reviews and meetings. **Program window: June 16 through Aug. 21.**
- No prior experience is required! You do not have to identify as Black to apply to be a reviewer, though we will seek our selected reviewer panel to be majority Black.

We will select no more than 60 community reviewers, depending on the volume of applications. You do not have to identify as Black to apply to be a reviewer, though we will seek our selected reviewer panel to be majority Black. Depending on the volume of people who apply to be reviewers, we may not be able to accept everyone. Reviewers will be notified of selection no later than June 12.

BLACK EMPOWERMENT WORKS COMMUNITY REVIEWER TIMELINE

Reviewer Commitment is between the dates of June 15th and August 21st

Meet & Greet Happy Hour (Optional)

June 20, 4 – 6 p.m.

In-Person Reviewer Training Day

Option 1: Saturday June 24, from 10 a.m.-5pm

Option 2: Tuesday June 29, from 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

Virtual Mock Small Group Sessions

Live Virtual Training on how to read, score, and rank applications for the BEW review cycle.

Option 1: July 6, Noon-1:30 p.m.

Option 2: July 6, 5:30-7 p.m.

Option 3: July 7, 9-10:30 a.m.

Option 4: July 7, Noon-1:30 p.m.

Individual Application Review – July 10-25

Each review team is assigned 12-15 applications to read. We estimate that it will take approximately 10 hours over the 2-week period.

Small Team Meeting #1 – July 26 or 27

The review teams meet after individually scoring each application and determine ratings according to the BEW rubric.

Virtual 90 Minute Session

12-1:30pm or 5:30 p.m.-7p.m.

Reviewer/ Applicant Conversations – July 31-Aug. 12

Grant applicants are given the opportunity to hold a 30-minute virtual meeting with the team of reviewers scoring their application to provide additional context and answer questions. Approximately 7 hours per small group

Small Team Meeting #2 – August 14 or 15

Review teams meet again following conversations with applicants to aggregate final scores and rankings.

Virtual 90 Minute Session

12-1:30pm or 5:30-7pm

All-Reviewer Decision Meeting – August 21st

60-minute session to determine funding for the next cycle of grantees.

WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A REVIEWER?

Being a reviewer includes a commitment of time and resources. All reviewers will participate in training, written application reviews, discussions with fellow reviewers, and grant applicant/reviewer conversations.

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Beyond time, the primary resource requirements are around technology. The written application reviews, meetings and conversations will all take place virtually. We ask that reviewers have:

- Access to a computer (with a camera, preferred)
- Strong internet connection
- Ability to participate in virtual meetings.

If you need any support with meeting these requirements, there is space to indicate such in the application. Doing so does not disqualify you from serving as a reviewer.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SERVING AS A REVIEWER?

Each facet of the Black Empowerment Works grant cycle is intended to build solutions and align systems to help families in our community thrive, with a specific focus on Black families and individuals. The grant cycle is not solely about investing dollars into great, Black-led work, but also investing in the people who raise their hands to make the decisions.

Through our training program, we envision that all Community Reviewers will gain a deeper understanding of the following topics:

- How racial inequity impacts our community, from a historical and current-day lens.
- How power and inequity show up in philanthropy, and strategies to address it through community-building and relationships.
- How your individual strengths manifest, and the power of radical candor to navigate disagreements. All reviewers will take the VIA Character Strengths Assessment.

By taking part in the decision-making process, Community Reviewers will experience:

- A deeper understanding of Black-led, grassroots work happening in Greater Cincinnati.
- Connections with other community members passionate about providing resources to and funding Black work.
- Ongoing opportunities to engage in Black Empowerment Works.

We appreciate the time that community members put into this process. While this is a volunteer opportunity, we have resources available to reduce barriers to participation.

HOW DO YOU APPLY TO BE A REVIEWER?

Complete an application by [visiting this site](#). Deadline to apply is **June 5 at 11:59 p.m.**

Note: The application system does not allow you to save as you go. It may take anywhere from 20 to 45 minutes to complete the application. We recommend looking at the APPLICATION QUESTIONS in advance and preparing your responses.

Should you run into any issues while applying, contact us at black-led@uwgc.org or at 513-762-7233.

HAVE QUESTIONS? CONNECT WITH US!

There are several ways to connect with us to get more information:

- **Attend one of our information sessions:** Find registration and/or a recording on our website [here](#).
- **Send us an email** at black-led@uwgc.org
- **Give us a call** at 513-762-7233. Leave a voicemail if we don't answer, and we'll get back to you within 24 hours.
- **Schedule a Question Session** for dedicated 1:1 time to talk through any questions you may have. Link to schedule [here](#).

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

NOTE: PAPER APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. PLEASE VISIT THIS LINK TO COMPLETE THE APPLICATION.

1. First and last name
2. Your Pronouns
 - a. She, Her, Hers
 - b. He, Him, His
 - c. They, Them Theirs
 - d. Prefer to Self-Describe
3. Zip code? We want to track geographic diversity.
4. Best phone number to reach you?
5. Best email address?
6. Tell us about you: Why do you want to be a Black Empowerment Works reviewer? What do you believe you would bring to the process (ex. experiences, skills) and what do you hope to get out of the process?
7. What does “community” mean to you? Which communities (geographic, group or otherwise) do you consider yourself a part of, and how do you give back/contribute your gifts and talents to support that community or communities?
8. Black Empowerment Works is a program of our Black-led Social Change Initiative, which aims to support spaces and provide resources to imagine and bring to life unencumbered, self-determined Black futures. If you were to envision an unencumbered (free from burden, barrier or difficulty), self-determined Black future, what might that look like? What do you think it would take to make that a reality?
9. To you, what are two of the greatest issues facing our Greater Cincinnati community that have impacted you, either directly or indirectly? What do you think it would take to solve those challenges?
10. Do you have **expertise/experience** in any of the following areas? Check all that apply.

| | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Quality Early Childcare and Education (Ages 0-5) b. Quality K-12 Education, including academic afterschool time c. Youth Social Emotional Skill Building and Leadership Development d. Career and Post-Secondary Preparation, Exploration and Training e. Financial Empowerment and Asset Building | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> f. Basic Needs and Housing g. Birth Equity (assurance of optimal births) h. Physical Health i. Mental Health j. Systems Change, Mobilizing and Movement Building k. Community and Social Connectedness l. None of the Above |
|---|---|
11. Do you have **passion/interest** in any of the following areas? Check all that apply.

| | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Quality Early Childcare and Education (Ages 0-5) b. Quality K-12 Education, including academic afterschool time c. Youth Social Emotional Skill Building and Leadership Development d. Career and Post-Secondary Preparation, Exploration and Training e. Financial Empowerment and Asset Building l. None of the above | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> f. Basic Needs and Housing g. Birth Equity (assurance of optimal births) h. Physical Health i. Mental Health j. Systems Change, Mobilizing and Movement Building k. Community and Social Connectedness |
|---|---|

12. All reviewers are required to attend a half-day training retreat. This will be an in-person retreat with lunch and refreshments provided. Reviewers attend one of 2 sessions. Please select which session you will attend.
 - a. Saturday June 24th 10:00am to 5:00pm
 - b. Thursday June 29th 9:00am to 4:00pm
13. All reviewers will be required to take part in a live training on July 6th or 7th. Which of the below training dates/times works for you? *Select all that apply*
 - a. July 6th 12:00pm to 1:30pm
 - b. July 6th 5:30pm to 7:00pm
 - c. July 7th 9:00am to 10:30am
 - d. July 7th 12:00pm to 1:30pm
 - e. None of the above work
14. One part of the decision-making process is reviewing written applications. The applications will be accessed and reviewed online through a designated platform. Do you have access to a computer and internet to review applications?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe (When selecting “Maybe” or “No”, you’ll receive a follow up question to describe)
15. Do you feel comfortable using technology and/or are you open to learning?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe (When selecting “Maybe” or “No”, you’ll receive a follow up question to describe)
16. Reviewers can expect to spend approximately 10 hours between July 10-25 reading and assessing written grant applications, plus an additional 5 hours conducting Grant Applicant/Reviewer conversation between July 31 – August 12, which would occur virtually. Do you have any concerns about your ability/availability to meet these requirements as a reviewer?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe (When selecting “Yes” or “Maybe”, you’ll receive a follow up question to describe)
17. Reviewers can expect to meet with their small review team on **July 26 or 27 for an initial meeting**, and **August 15 or 16 for a final recommendation meeting**. Which of the following options works best for you for the **initial small team meeting**? Check all that apply.
 - a. July 26, 12:00 – 1:30 PM
 - b. July 26, 5:30 – 7:00 PM
 - c. July 27, 12:00 – 1:30 PM
 - d. July 27, 5:30 – 7:00 PM
 - e. None of the above
18. Reviewers can expect to meet with their small review team on July 26th or 27th for an initial meeting, and **August 14 or 15 for a final recommendation meeting**. Which of the following options works best for you for the **final small team meeting**? Check all that apply
 - a. August 14, 12:00 – 1:30 PM
 - b. August 14, 5:30 – 7:00 PM
 - c. August 15, 12:00 – 1:30 PM
 - d. August 15, 5:30 – 7:00 PM
 - e. None of the above
19. Will you need any support in meeting the reviewer commitments?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe (When selecting “Yes” or “Maybe”, you’ll receive a follow up question to describe).

20. Gender identity/expression
- Female
 - Male
 - Non-binary/Third Gender
 - Prefer to self-describe (please describe)
 - Prefer not to say
21. Age
- 18-24
 - 25-30
 - 31-40
 - 41-55
 - 56-70
 - 71+
22. Race/Ethnicity. Select All that Apply
- African American or Black
 - American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - Arab or Middle Eastern
 - Asian
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - Caucasian or White
 - Multiracial
 - Prefer to self-describe
 - Prefer not to say
23. Do you have a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act?
- Yes
 - No
 - Prefer not to say
24. Do you identify as a military veteran or service member?
- Yes
 - No
 - Prefer not to say
25. What is your highest level of education completed?
- Some high school, no diploma
 - High school diploma or equivalent
 - Some college
 - College degree
 - Advanced Degree
 - I prefer not to say
 - Other
26. What's your level of experience with grants/grant processes? Select all that apply.
- I have applied for grants before
 - I have reviewed grant applications before
 - I have helped to create grant processes
 - I have no prior grant experience
 - I prefer not to say
27. Which option best describes you?
- I am a more introverted person who processes information internally.
 - I am a more extroverted person who processes information externally.