

BLACK EMPOWERMENT WORKS:

CLASS 1 REPORT

At United Way of Greater Cincinnati, we believe all families in our region deserve economic well-being, so we build solutions and align systems to help people thrive.

Summary

Black Empowerment Works, an equity-focused grant program, promotes Black self-determination, social mobility and economic prosperity by resourcing and funding grassroots-generated, Black-led ideas, programs and projects.

Designed to invest in efforts that often go unfunded or underfunded, this program is one of the signature efforts under our Black-led Social Change Initiative and part of our strategy to amplify community voice, invest in community-based solutions and transform the way we invest in our community.

The first Black Empowerment Works grant application launched in February 2020 after months of community-engaged design work completed by a group of leaders, the 2019-2020 Champions of Change. Between June 2020 and August 2021, the program awarded \$600,544 in grants to 28 local Black-led initiatives.

Reviewer Highlights

As a part of the program design, community members made the investment decisions and selected grantees who gained access to funds, as well as additional resources and support to grow their work and share their expertise. Community members received training and worked in teams to assess applications.

During the application process:

30

Volunteer
Reviewers

600+

Volunteer
Review hours

150+

Total application
support hours

4.6/5

Average experience
score of reviewers

“Because I served as a reviewer, I learned about grassroots organizations and opportunities for community growth and support that I wouldn’t have normally been privy to. Also, I’m blessed to be able to ‘shift’ my mindset for growth and success; things that I had never considered judgmental were brought to my attention and needed changes were learned during and through this process.”

– Anonymous reviewer



Program Highlights

Throughout the program year, United Way provided grantees with resources to carry out their work, opportunities to connect with other changemakers, and spaces to share their expertise with the broader community.

28 grantees worked in 4 focus areas:



Education



Financial Stability



Health



Community
Connectedness

96%

of funded organizations were able to **build capacity** during the grant year.

61%

established new partnerships.

64%

secured additional funding during the grant cycle, in part with support from United Way.

COVID-19 Impact

COVID-19 impacted grantees' ability to carry out the work and gave rise to emerging needs in the community. Funded partners **found ways to deliver content** in the virtual environment and took on **new work** to help.

- High Achievers and Ladies of Leadership began operating remote-learning sites so children could access virtual school safely. Through their connection to United Way, both organizations met with members of county administration and their insights influenced the creation of the Youth Services Relief Fund.
- Queen City Foundation provided PPE and care navigation to support families both served and not served by the program's educational programming.

Program Outcomes

1,939 YOUTH

gained access to critical academic & social-emotional supports, leading to strong school outcomes.

80 CHILDREN

accessed quality early childhood education in a community without a local resource.

42 ADULTS

gained employment, including creatives and those considered difficult to employ.

"Doors have been opening; we are on our way!"

– Deasa Dorsey,
iCan Health

77 PEOPLE

gained knowledge of key financial empowerment tools.

255 PEOPLE

ranging from young children to adults, gained entrepreneurship experiences.

"Through BEW and our other community partners, we have increased community visibility, which has allowed us to serve more people in the community."

– Morgan Whaley, Love in Action

156 PEOPLE

accessed support to pursue higher education.

3,873 PEOPLE

access to basic-needs resources and education, contributing to leading healthier lives.

"Just the experience of applying for and receiving our first major grant taught us a lot. It increased our grant writing, benchmarking, and reporting knowledge and capabilities. . . The Black Empowerment Works grant not only allowed us to create a community garden, but it also allowed us to deliver our mission more effectively and support other Triiibe Foundation programming."

– Jennie Wright, Triiibe Foundation