



**Special Grant Proposal
Meeting Minutes
Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males
Indiana Civil Rights Commission
Conference Room
100 North Senate Avenue, Room N300
Indianapolis, IN 46204
Wednesday, December 11, 2024**

Call to Order: A Special Grant Proposal meeting of the Indiana Commission on the Social Status of Black Males (ICSSBM) was held on Wednesday, December 4, 2024, in person at the Indiana Civil Rights Commission Conference Room, and virtually via Zoom for Government. A quorum was not established to conduct a vote, and an emergency Commission meeting was scheduled for Wednesday, December 11, 2024. The December 11, meeting was called to order at 10:43am.

Roll call - Commissioners in attendance: Commissioner Damein Jones (Proxy FSSA), Commissioner (Chair) Kari Jones (Proxy Div. of Mental Health and Addiction), Commissioner Keshia Rich (Proxy IDOA), Commissioner Lamar Sykes (Speaker Huston), and Commissioner Tori Williams (Proxy Dept. of Corrections).

Via Zoom for Government: Commissioner Julie McGuire (State Representative), Commissioner Elijah Neal (Senator Bray), and Commissioner (Vice-Chair) Richard Okello (Proxy ICRC).

Commissioners absent: Commissioner Kenneth Allen (Speaker Huston), Commissioner Vaneta Becker (Senator), Commissioner William Durham (Proxy Dept. of Education), Commissioner Larry Erving (Proxy Dept. of Health), Commissioner Shanel Poole (Speaker Huston), Commissioner Dave Rozzell (Senator Bray), Commissioner Dwayne Sawyer (Senator Bray), Commissioner Vernon Smith (Representative), and Commissioner Greg Taylor (Senator).

Commissioner (Chair) Kari Jones stated a quorum was established at 10:48am.

Others in attendance: Alexis Gonzalez, Director, Indiana Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs, Jordan Teske-Harrison, Director, Indiana Commission for Women, Gabriel Kramer, Cultural Commissioner Coordinator, Katy Merrel, Interim Deputy Director of Programming, Indiana Civil Rights Commission (ICRC), and Nicole Owens, Director, Indiana Native American Indian Affairs Commission.

Chair's Report: Chair Jones opened the meeting by thanking and acknowledging Commission members for attending the special grant meeting. In addition, Chair Jones acknowledged grant subcommittee members, Commissioner (Vice Chair) Richard Okello for chairing the subcommittee, Commissioner Tori Williams, Commissioner Dave Rozzell, and Commissioner Damein Jones for their hard work regarding this process. Following the Chair's announcement, she turned the proceedings over to Commissioner (Vice Chair) Richard Okello who thanked the subcommittee as well for their diligent effort reviewing 22 grant proposals.

Grant Sub-Committee: Commissioner Richard Okello recognized Director Giles for his hard work regarding the grant program and the Commission's work overall. Commissioner Okello stated that the sub-committee recommended that four agencies be funded for 2024. The four applicants were selected out of 22 proposals for \$7,000 the Commission agreed to allocate for this year.

The Commission members reviewed the following four funding proposals:

1. Organization/Project Title: Nova XSTREME, INC/Empowering Future Leaders: STEM Attack for Advancing Educational and Social Success of Black Males in Indiana

Amount Requested: \$10,000

Grant Allocation: \$2,500 for STEM kits and supplies, workbooks, and educational resources.

Project Description: The STEM Attack Program by the Nyla Nova Foundation empowers young Black males in Indiana, particularly those from underserved communities, by providing hands-on STEM education, mentorship, and life skills training. Targeting middle and high school students aged 12 to 18, the program fosters resilience and enhances academic performance while preparing participants for future STEM careers. Integrating workshops on health, wellness, and career exploration, STEM Attack aims to support over 200 participants annually across Indianapolis, bridging educational and social gaps.

Reason for Recommendation: The committee believed that Nova's hands-on learning experiences will enhance foundational skills in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). This approach gives participants a competitive advantage in the emerging workforce. In line with the commission's emphasis on education and employment, this investment aims to prepare a skilled workforce to meet future demands.

2. Organization/Project Title: New Direction Church, INC/The Nehemiah Project

Amount Requested: \$10,050

Grant Allocation: \$2,060 to cover one student's tuition and transportation expenses.

Project Description: In partnership with The Nehemiah Project and the Fuqua Institute of Beauty Culture, the program supports two cohorts of construction and cosmetology students. Each participant receives personalized support from community advocates and mentors while engaging in paid training that addresses financial needs and aims to reduce violence and recidivism. Focused on marginalized African American men and women aged 18 and older in Marion County, the program provides resources such as job readiness workshops and support services to facilitate successful community reintegration.

Reason for Recommendation: The committee praised the project's holistic approach, incorporating Vocational Training, On-the-Job Training, Mentorship Programs, and Entrepreneurship Education. This alignment with our goals demonstrates a strong commitment to empowering individuals with essential skills, particularly fostering innovation and self-sufficiency. Overall, the project's strategy is impressive and effectively supports our objectives.

3. Organization/Project Title: The Office Group/Be Unbound: Empower, Support, and Transform

Amount Requested: \$6,000

Grant Allocation: \$1,750 for a single 10-session cohort that includes a facilitator and program materials (without a yoga instructor).

Project Description: The project aims to facilitate closed male-focused support groups that address the unique challenges faced by Black males, including mental health, relationships, and personal development. These groups will provide a safe space for participants to share their experiences and receive peer support. The program's benefits include support for fathers, events centered on leadership and communication, and peer-led discussions on masculinity. The target populations for these groups include Black males seeking personal growth, particularly new and single fathers, barbers, and professional men in high-stress careers such as executives and entrepreneurs.

Reason for Recommendation: The committee appreciated this project's inclusive approach, which engages men from diverse social strata, including professionals, to foster meaningful discussions on mental health, relationships, and personal development. This initiative aligns with the commission's commitment to sound mental health practices. By funding this project, will help create a supportive network that prioritizes well-being and promotes mental health awareness in our community.

4. Organization/Project Title: Perseverance Partners, LLC/Baby Blueprint

Amount Requested: \$113,000

Grant Allocation: \$690 to support one participant along with gas cards for transportation needs.

Project Description: The project aims to engage community partners to establish referral pathways to the program, including the Department of Child Services and Indiana Department of Health. It will launch a 6-week curriculum designed for expecting fathers, featuring an in-person meet and greet along with six virtual classes facilitated by a Community Health Worker. The initiative will host father-to-be baby showers to celebrate fatherhood, and it will provide two months of follow-up care with check-ins via Zoom or phone, offering parenting resources and referrals to counseling as needed to support mental health.

Reason for Recommendation: The committee recognized the importance of supporting expectant fathers through a thoughtfully designed father engagement curriculum. This program will culminate in a baby shower experience that aligns with our commission's vision of promoting men of character and leadership within the family. By allocating grant dollars to this initiative, we aim to foster a sense of responsibility and community among fathers, ultimately benefiting families and society as a whole.

Total Recommended Funding Allocation: \$7,000

Remaining Budget: \$0

Following the Grant Subcommittee report, Commissioner (Vice Chair) Richard Okello entertained a motion to approve recommended grant proposals for funding as presented. The motion was approved by Commissioner Elijah Neal and seconded by Commissioner Damein Jones.

Roll-call vote as follows: Commissioner Damein Jones (Y), Commissioner (Chair) Kari Jones (Y), Commissioner Julie McGuire (Y), Commissioner Elijah Neal (Y), Commissioner (Vice-Chair) Richard Okello (Y), Commissioner Kesha Rich (Y), Commissioner Lamar Sykes (Y), and Commissioner Tori Williams (Y). The vote passed unanimously.

There being no further business to discuss, the ICSSBM December 11, 2024 Special Grant Proposal meeting concluded at 10:52am.