

YMI Cultural Center Building Renovation and Restoration

RFP for Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

YMI Cultural Center

Ms. Dewana Little
39 South Market Street
Asheville, NC 28801

dlittle@ymiculturecenter.org
O: 828-252-4614
F: 250000

Mr. Philippe Philippe Rosse

39 South Market Street
Asheville, North Carolina 28801

philippe@ymiculturalcenter.org
O: 8282438762

Application Form

Question Group

Buncombe County requests proposals for projects to help the community recover from and respond to COVID-19 and its negative economic impacts.

Buncombe County has been awarded \$50,733,290 in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (Recovery Funding), as part of the American Rescue Plan Act. This infusion of federal resources is intended to help turn the tide on the pandemic, address its economic fallout, and lay the foundation for a strong and equitable recovery.

Buncombe County is committed to investing these funds in projects that:

- Align to county strategic plan and community priorities
- Support equitable outcomes for most impacted populations
- Leverage and align with other governmental funding sources
- Make best use of this one-time infusion of resources
- Have a lasting impact

Proposals shall be submitted in accordance with the terms and conditions of this RFP and any addenda issued hereto.

[Click here for the full terms and conditions of the RFP](#)

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds*

Name of Project.

YMI Cultural Center Building Renovation and Restoration

Amount of Funds Requested*

\$1,000,000.00

Recovery Fund Eligible Category*

Please select one:

Services for disproportionately impacted communities

Brief Project Description*

Provide a short summary of your proposed project.

YMI has begun a capacity-building project to repair its building and enhance space usage for expanded economic and social programs. Building restoration will enable YMI to promote leadership development; serve as a beacon for the cultural history of this population; and build lasting partnerships with public and private leaders on behalf of equity for this disproportionately impacted community.

Expanded service capacity includes: (1) workforce training and business development programs with a “circle of support” addressing barriers to employment that were exacerbated by the pandemic, where Black populations disproportionately felt the brunt of economic downturns; (2) health and wellness community outreach programs; (3) successful transitions, a program of homeownership and asset building; and (4) positive steps enrichment opportunities for youth.

The overall goal of YMI’s physical stabilization and service growth is upward economic mobility for African-American community.

Project Plan*

Explain how the project will be structured and implemented, including timeframe.

The proposed YMI Capacity Development Project (CDP) is a comprehensive initiative to preserve, restore, and renovate the historic YMI building to build capacity and support equity for the local Black community. The project plan will address the following:

- Spatially, renovations will expand and re-purpose existing spaces to increase program and service capacity and community engagement. This includes creating a new classroom and multipurpose event room, upgrading the existing exhibition galleries and auditorium, and improving the building’s rental office and retail spaces. The project will also create permanent displays for their collection of art and artifacts celebrating Black history and culture, helping to stimulate additional tourism to the area.
- Structurally, the project will address deteriorated building conditions and ensure the long-term health of the facility and its users. Upgrading all major building systems—including heating/cooling, plumbing, electrical, fire protection, and security—will stabilize this historic facility for ongoing, sustainable operations.

To help evaluate the building’s needs and create a project plan, the YMI contracted the Self-Help Real Estate Team in 2019 to lead a building assessment and financial feasibility analysis for this renovation project. In partnership with the YMI, Self-Help released a request for qualifications (RFQ) for design and construction services, ultimately selecting a team led by Neighboring Concepts (a Black-owned architecture firm based in Charlotte) and supported by general contracting firm WEAVERCOOKE Construction. This team has worked closely with the YMI to turn their vision into a comprehensive renovation plan that supports their mission activities and maximizes the building’s potential.

The project team has recently completed schematic design plans and cost estimates for the renovation. Construction documents are underway in preparation to submit plans to the City of Asheville for building permits later this fall. Depending on the permitting review process and fundraising progress, we expect to begin construction by the end of 2021, and with an estimated 8-month construction duration, to complete the project by fall 2022. Full building schematics and work plan are available upon request.

Phase/Milestone	Estimated Completion
Prepare construction documents; review project scope with Planning Dept. and Historic Resource Commission	June-August 2021
Initiate fundraising campaign	July 2021
Submit plans to City of Asheville for permitting; launch public fundraising campaign	September 2021
Sign construction contracts; obtain building permit & final pricing	October-November 2021
Begin construction	December 2021
Complete fundraising campaign and construction	August 2022

YMI can remain open during physical restoration. When internal renovations begin, certain staff and programs of YMI may need to relocate to adjacent office spaces.

Statement of Need*

Describe the need that this project will address. Include data to demonstrate the need, and cite the source of the data.

YMI's greatest asset is its building, constructed in 1893 and recognized as a national historic landmark. Assessments show the structural integrity of the YMI has been compromised, with the last significant repair work 40 years ago. To maintain the spirit and historical integrity of the facility, major preservation, restoration, and renovations are required to stabilize and improve the building. A thorough building assessment completed by a professional engineering and design team in 2020 found significant structural concerns and repair needs to preserve the YMI facility. These include: (1) replacing the roof; (2) repairing drainage systems and exterior brick to stop water intrusion; (3) adding structural supports; (4) replacing the HVAC systems, which are past their usable life and obsolete; (5) upgrading fire alarm/protection systems; and (6) repairing the elevator and wheelchair lift for ADA compliance. Pre-preservation costs of business assessment and feasibility studies have been secured and work completed. Work has begun on critical structural repairs, and funding will complete the work.

By stabilizing the building, YMI can focus on capacity and financial sustainability through renovation and outward expansion of interior spaces. Needed interior renovations will transform and re-function underutilized spaces to increase meeting and event capacity, and maximize income-generating potential through improved event and long-term tenant rentals. The full interior project scope includes classrooms, multipurpose rooms, enhanced performance spaces, a commercial kitchen, office and retail upgrades, and storage. This work will be the foundation of equity in Buncombe County especially at this critical time for the Black community. Black residents experienced 26% higher cases of COVID-19 than their percentage of the population (NCDHHS COVID-19 website). The YMI will serve as a beacon for these critical resources and services needed for a full and vibrant recovery.

Link to COVID-19*

Identify a health or economic harm resulting from or exacerbated by the public health emergency, describe the nature and extent of that harm, and explain how the use of this funding would address such harm.

Economic: Even before COVID-19, significant gaps were noted: (1) The mean household income for Blacks is just 70.9% (\$30,000) that for the City of Asheville (\$42,333); (2) 39% of Black women live below the Asheville poverty line, and 61% of single Black mothers live below the poverty line; (3) 10x wealth gap between white and black households in net worth. These gaps grew during COVID-19, as unemployment hit minorities the hardest, when lower-wage jobs shut down. With greater space capacity, YMI will expand its workforce development and training programs to build job skills for high-demand jobs; support workforce re-entry; promote home ownership; build financial literacy; and serve as a business incubator.

Education: Researchers nationwide estimate learning losses, particularly for minorities, equal to between six months to a year for reading and math respectively. Greater classroom space will be allocated to educational programs: YMI will schedule daily tutoring and homework support for children afterschool. Mentors will be made available to youth to help with readjustments to an onsite school experience following COVID-19. These supports will help reduce the alarming achievement gaps—close to 60% (as reported by Asheville City schools), increase early grade literacy rates, and improve college and career readiness for older youth.

Health: Black residents of Buncombe County have low COVID-19 vaccination rates compared to the non-minority community (26% differential statewide). Re-functioned space in YMI will house a testing and vaccination program, with the goal to increase the number of Blacks and other minorities vaccinated. Funding will support weekly staffing of nurses and needed supplies. While walk-in individuals will be served, the YMI website will be updated to include a page for scheduling appointments. Similar efforts will focus on mental and behavioral health, exercise and healthy lifestyles and other health issues impacted by the pandemic.

Population Served*

Define the population to be served by this project, including volume and demographic characteristics of those served.

YMI has served as a center for Black culture and education for more than 100 years, and is currently embracing its role as a lead organization for advancing equity and empowerment for Blacks in Asheville. This central role uniquely positions YMI to build out its programs and services in the community. YMI is intrinsically culturally literate, has the facilities and equipment to dedicate to the program, and is comfortably accessible to the target population. Due to this historic presence and critical foundational role, the impact of the YMI is omnipresent among the Black community.

YMI is located in an IRS Qualified Census Tract (QCT) 1.00 and serves primarily residents from two adjacent QCTs 9.00 and 10.00 (Metropolitan Area, Asheville, NC MSA; County Buncombe County). Through ongoing programs as well as monthly and annual community activities, more than 2,000 participants engage in the core YMI programs. While these individuals come from a variety of demographic and economic backgrounds, reflecting QCT designations, they are primarily local, Black, and from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

This population will continue to be a core constituency for YMI. However, with expanded capacity, marketing and recruitment, YMI anticipates reaching more residents across Buncombe County. Further, a regional network will connect these critical services and support to other Black communities in Western North Carolina, focusing initially on Burke, Transylvania and Rutherford Counties. (Burke and Rutherford Counties contain three and one QCTs respectively.)

Through community forums, cultural events (including Goombay), and cultural engagement, tens of thousands individuals will engage in cultural and recreational efforts. These events will integrate the whole community in social interaction and promote education, historic understanding, cultural exchange, and recreation. These events will be promoted throughout the County and will include all demographics.

Results*

Describe the proposed impact of the project. List at least 3 performance measures that will be tracked and reported. If possible, include baselines and goals for each performance measure.

Community Engagement: YMI is an important cornerstone of the Black community. One of YMI's strategic goals is greater engagement across the Black community to create a welcoming environment for all populations. YMI anticipates increased attendance at its cultural events; foot traffic in YMI's galleries featuring local artists and permanent exhibitions of Black history and culture; and at shared community events. Results will be between 20% to 40% increase in attendance across these events.

'Culture of Health': With space expansion: (1) YMI can better ensure no one is disenfranchised from the educational, economic, and workforce health of the community. (1) 100 participants will complete the workforce development program and 25 the entrepreneurial program each year; (2) expanded health

programs will increase the COVID-19 vaccination percentages across the Black community by 20%; and (3) 100 youth in YMI's educational programs will increase academic outcomes by 15%.

Building: Powering inefficient systems imposes a substantial financial and environmental cost to building budgets. The installation of new HVAC systems is projected to save YMI up to 30% operating costs, which could then be reallocated to direct programs. Other infrastructure improvements (plumbing, electrical) are estimated to show significant cost savings as well, up to 20%.

Revenue-generating renovations: The building assessment report also identified the underutilized spaces across the building that can be brought into active use for additional meetings, events, and programs once the building is structurally and mechanically sound. It is expected that initial community participation will increase 40% in the first year and 20% in each subsequent year following. The increased revenue from space rentals and special events will also increase from \$80,000 currently to a projected \$250,000 after completion, engendering sustained financial and partnership support from all members of the community.

Evaluation*

Describe the data collection, analysis, and quality assurance measures you will use to assure ongoing, effective tracking of contract requirements and outcomes.

For community outreach, evaluation will track attendance at collaborative community and historic events hosted at or sponsored by YMI.

For building repairs, renovation, and restoration, evaluation analysis will review benchmarks for completion set by YMI and contractors. Outcomes will be YMI's re-opening.

For expanded workforce development and youth education programs, the quantitative evaluation will include skills pre-tests to capture baseline data for measuring growth, mid-program and end of program testing. For business entrepreneurial training, the evaluation will track progress on creating a business plan. Progress reports will monitor improvements as well as challenges.

For health programs, quantitative evaluation will be measured by the number of Blacks who receive COVID-19 vaccinations through YMI, and how this number impacts the percent of Blacks in the county who are vaccinated.

Qualitative evaluations will require all participants will be required to prepare a video or written summary of their experience in the program. These evaluations will be brought together to "tell a story" about the success of the YMI and its role in the community on behalf of the Black population.

Specific points for evaluation tracking are as follows: (1) The impact of the new facility and expanded program and service space is measured by the number of individual visitors to YMI, program participants, and sponsored events. (2) Success is also determined by operational cost savings as a result of building efficiencies; (3) the number of individuals who completed YMI programs who are employed; (4) the number of new businesses incubations; (5) the number of youth increasing school grades; and (6) the number of hosted programs/events. Evaluation will also measure YMI's participation in building equitable strategies with the county that: (1) address racial justice; and (2) lead to economic, social, systematic, structural, and institutional change.

Equity Impact*

How will this effort help build toward a just, equitable, and sustainable COVID-19 recovery? How are the root causes and/or disproportionate impacts of inequities addressed?

Through sustainability of its facilities as well as educational, health, workforce, cultural, and community programs and services, YMI uniquely addresses the opportunity gap faced by Blacks. This root cause of inequity refers to the arbitrary circumstances in which people are born and how these circumstances too often determine their opportunities in life. YMI's efforts will instead ensure all people have the chance to achieve to the best of their potential.

YMI has served as a center for Black culture and education for 120 years, and is currently embracing its role as a lead organization for advancing equity and empowerment for Blacks in Asheville. YMI is intrinsically culturally literate, has the facilities and equipment to dedicate to the program, and is comfortably accessible to the target population. Through restoration and renovation of its physical building and internal space, YMI will play an even greater role in ensuring equity is a standard for the county. The YMI has served as a key forum for difficult, but critical conversations, regarding issues of racial reconciliation and the best path forward as a whole community. The YMI leadership has served on multiple Boards and committees, and will continue to provide a key location for continued engagement.

Through its community involvement and collaborative partnerships, YMI has the human capacity to develop and deliver a meaningful program with achievable outcomes focusing on supporting an equitable recovery from the effects of the pandemic (mental and physical health, education and workforce readiness). Staff members comprise qualified professionals who play a key role in building wealth and assets in the Black Asheville community. This leadership will extend to other Black community organizations to ensure a stronger grassroots presence.

In this position, YMI is best suited to eliminate inequitable opportunities across the health, economic, workforce, and education sectors in Buncombe County.

Project Partners*

Identify any subcontractors you intend to use for the proposed scope of work. For each subcontractor listed, indicate:

- 1.) What products and/or services are to be supplied by that subcontractor and;
- 2.) What percentage of the overall scope of work that subcontractor will perform.

Also, list non-funded key partners critical to project.

Construction: (100% of service)

WEAVERCOOKE Construction, general contractor for the renovation project, has solicited input from local subcontractors to inform their price estimates. They will bid the project in fall 2021 to finalize subcontractor selection. WEAVERCOOKE was selected for this project due to their commitment to and track record of subcontracting with minority and/or women-owned business enterprises (M/WBEs). Their final vendor selections will reflect this commitment.

Other members of the design and construction team include: (1) Neighboring Concepts, a Black-owned architectural firm, which will serve as lead designer; (2) O'Brien Architecture, which will be a preservation consultant; and (3) C2 Engineering Solutions, a full-service mechanical, electrical, and plumbing consulting firm. Self-Help Credit Union will continue to support YMI throughout the process.

Program: (key stakeholders)

To eliminate duplication of services, YMI prioritizes partnering with and expanding existing community initiatives from all sectors.

Economic Development engages Self-Help Credit Union, OnTrack, AB Tech, Asheville Chamber of Commerce, and Mountain BizWorks. Key business partners include Keller Williams, Emery Electric, MB Haynes and Virtelle Hotel Group.

Youth and Education engages the YMCA, UNC-Asheville, Asheville City/Buncombe County schools, and local universities.

Health and Wellness engages the Buncombe County Department of Health, VAYA, MAHEC and Asheville Buncombe Institute of Parity Achievement (ABIPA)

Community:

YMI is strengthening partnerships with key tenants on the “Block,” including Eagle Market Streets, Mount Zion Baptist Church and the River Front Development Group. YMI will also expand their larger community-wide engagement through the cultural and tourism offices of the City of Asheville, Buncombe County, and Chamber of Commerce, as well as partners in the adjacent African-American communities in Western North Carolina.

Capacity*

Describe the background, experience, and capabilities of your organization or department as it relates to capacity for delivering the proposed project and managing federal funds.

The YMI staff and Board is 100% representative of and connected to the Black community. YMI’s Board is led by Anthony Thomas, owner of UpStaff Personnel, who has served in community leadership for more than a decade. Dewana Little, YMI’s Executive Director, has a strong background in organizational capacity-building and banking, including her work with Self-Help Credit Union. The YMI operations team is led by Kelsey Simmons, Director of Programs.

In addition to these key staff, each major program area will be led by a Board-sanctioned community leader with expertise. These individuals will provide insight and guidance in implementing key services and integration of partners and stakeholders. They include:

- Philip Cooper, a regional leader in workforce development and implementation of Community Health Workers and Peer Support Specialist models.
- Fahreed Shabazz, a Licensed Practical Nurse certified in administration of the Moderna COVID-19 Vaccine and Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine
- Daniel Young, employee of Asheville City schools and founder of Successful Transitions.
- Cassandra Ingram, former employee of both Asheville City schools and Family Preservation Services, and expert on social-emotional learning.

YMI’s current funding campaign will also include an additional \$1.4 million of funds raised for increased organizational capacity. This funding will promote strategic planning, Board development, and staff and volunteer training programs. The goal will be to increase skills and knowledge through professional development, reviews of best practices, and discussions of new ways to improve processes, programs, policies, and relationships with the community. It will also provide critical investments in program development, central administration staff, and procedures and establishment of a robust community engagement and development department. This initial investment will help ensure sustained excellence and funding.

Budget*

Provide a detailed project budget including all proposed project revenues and expenditures, including explanations and methodology. For all revenue sources, list the funder and denote whether funds are confirmed or pending. For project expenses, denote all capital vs. operating costs, and reflect which specific expenses are proposed to be

funded with one-time Buncombe County Recovery Funds.

Download a copy of the budget form [HERE](#). Complete the form, and upload it using the button below.

Recovery-Funds-budget-template.xlsx

Special Considerations*

Provide any other information that might assist the County in its selection.

When the YMI was built, there was a lack of educational opportunities for Black people in Asheville. The YMI provided a night school for adults, a day school for youth, and the city's first kindergarten for Black children. A vibrant lecture series combined mechanical and industrial education with the cultural arts. In its earliest days, concert violinist Joseph Henry Douglass, the grandson of abolitionist Frederick Douglass, performed at the YMI, as did Flora Batson, the internationally acclaimed "Queen of Song." In 1910, YMI had its own orchestra. In addition to a swimming pool, public bath, and other health facilities, which paralleled those of the YMCA, the YMI also provided other amenities not available to the Black community such as a library, medical office, drug store, funeral parlor, and lecture hall. Congregations without a church home met there, and through the 1960s the YMI provided lodging for African-American travelers turned away from segregated hotels in the area.

Since the first brick was laid, YMI has reflected the self-reliance and richness of the Black community and has garnered respect from policymakers and stakeholders across the county. Intentional programming has served to support the community through: (1) preservation of cultural artifacts and heritage; (2) creative place-making and hosting of special events and festivals; (3) educational and community programs; and (4) economic development and business incubation. Today, the facility houses archives and artifacts in permanent exhibits and a library that traces African-American history in the region. Exhibits showcase the work of local artists, and festivals held throughout the year celebrate Black culture and encourage community involvement. The YMI hosts financial workshops, workforce training programs, youth tutoring and mentoring, and more.

** Please note, schematic and detailed reports of construction and financial planning and fundraising can be provided as an addendum.

File Attachment Summary

Applicant File Uploads

- Recovery-Funds-budget-template.xlsx

Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Proposed Project Budget

Organization Name:	YMI Cultural Center
Project Name:	
Amount Requested:	\$1,000,000

Proposed Project Revenue Funder	Amount	Confirmed or Pending?	Notes
Proposed Buncombe COVID Recovery Funds	\$ 1,000,000.00	Pending	
TDA	\$ 800,000.00	Confirmed	Confirmed and received
Asheville COVID Recovery Funds	\$ 1,000,000.00	Pending	Confirmed that application in line with city goal; Decision in August;
Dogwood Health Trust	\$ 500,000.00	Pending	Waiting final guidelines, but submission requested by funder
National Park Service- Department of the Interior	\$ 500,000.00	Pending	Application submitted in Spring 2021
Cannon Foundation	\$ 150,000.00	Pending	Application requested for October 2021 deadline by funder
Business Donations	\$ 415,050.00	Pending	Received \$40,000- Public Campaign starts October 2021
Individual Donations	\$ 415,050.00	Pending	Received \$30,000- Public Campaign starts October 2021
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
List other sources here			
Total	\$ 4,780,100.00		

Proposed Project Expenses	Proposed Recovery Funds	Other Funds	Total	Capital or Operating Expense?	Notes
Miscellaneous Predevelopment Costs		\$ 42,863.00	\$ 42,863.00	Capital	Feasibility Study costs (design & TA fees), plus roof & elevator repairs completed prior to July 2020.
Refinancing Existing Debt		\$ 387,000.00	\$ 387,000.00	Capital	Existing bank note; Taxes and fees owed
Demolition		\$ 102,685.00	\$ 102,685.00	Capital	Includes lead, asbestos and PCB abatement during demolition.
Interior/Exterior Upgrades: Concrete; Metals; Masonry/Stone; and Doors, Windows & Glass		\$ 331,210.00	\$ 331,210.00	Capital	Includes new ADA ramp, foundation work, sidewalk/curb work, tuckpointing & patching façade and interior brick, new exterior stairs, new interior stair railings, and door & window frame repairs & replacements.
Interior/Exterior Upgrades: Thermal and Moisture Protection		\$ 142,632.00	\$ 142,632.00	Capital	Includes roof replacement, waterproofing in basement, and caulking/sealants throughout the building.
Interior Upgrades: Finishes & Drywall; Carpentry/Millwork; Specialties & Equipment		\$ 555,623.00	\$ 555,623.00	Capital	Includes drywall, refinishing wood floors, replacing existing carpet/tile, painting, new cabinetry/countertops and appliances/equipment in warming kitchen, new art display case, signage, and elevator repairs.
Interior Upgrades: Furnishings		\$ 138,000.00	\$ 138,000.00	Capital	Furniture, fixtures & equipment throughout the building.
Plumbing	\$ 109,631.00	\$ 98,970.00	\$ 208,601.00	Capital	New fixtures in all bathrooms, plumbing/grease trap/gas piping for commercial kitchen, and reworking of basement piping
HVAC	\$ 214,108.00		\$ 214,108.00	Capital	Includes new split systems across entire building
Fire Protection & New Water Service	\$ 257,330.00		\$ 257,330.00	Capital	Includes full-building sprinkler system required by code, and associated water supply & backflow preventer system.
Electrical, Fire Alarm & Communications	\$ 418,931.00		\$ 418,931.00	Capital	Includes upgraded electrical service & lighting, voice/data/cable service, and new fire alarm system.
General Conditions & Contractor Fees		\$ 666,225.00	\$ 666,225.00	Capital	Includes site management, material handling, project supervision, subcontractor bonds, and general contractor's insurance and fees.
Retail Space Upgrades		\$ 469,784.00	\$ 469,784.00	Capital	Improvements to vacant retail spaces
Architectural and Engineering Fees		\$ 262,250.00	\$ 262,250.00	Capital	Includes tenant improvements, exterior signage, data/cable wiring and additional hard costs.
Construction Soft Costs		\$ 199,088.00	\$ 199,088.00	Capital	Covers schematic design, further design dvlp, construction documents, permitting, final bidding, construction administration, and project closeout.
Contingency Funds		\$ 203,744.00	\$ 203,744.00	Capital	In case of unknowns or cost overruns.

Project Management Fee		\$ 180,000.00	\$ 180,000.00	Capital	
			\$ -		
			\$ -		
			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
List expenses here			\$ -		
Total			\$ 4,780,074.00		