

FY2024 Buncombe County Strategic Partnership Grant Report

Organization Name:	Black Wall Street AVL	
Project Name:	Strengthening BIPOC Buisnesses in WNC	
Reporting Quarter: (Check one)		Quarter 1 (July 1, 2023 - September 30, 2023)
		Quarter 2 (October 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023)
		Quarter 3 (January 1, 2024 - March 31, 2024)
	X	Quarter 4 (April 1, 2024 - June 30, 2024)

Narrative summary of grant related activities

Please provide a brief summary (no more than 1500 characters). You may attach supplemental documents if needed.

Quarter 1	<p>This quarter BWS moved forward with solidifying community partnerships for the project and searching for key people to implement our program. We launched our partnership with Asheville City Schools so that Black Wall Street, Jr is an official club inside Asheville School System. We partnered with Entrepreneurs in Schools and Franklin School of Innovation for their upcoming InnovationFest celebration. We partnered with Thrive AVL to evaluate and refine our approach to the tourism specific cohort answering the question "How can tourism benefit BIPOC businesses in Buncombe County." We partnered with The Radical Hotel (new construction in the River Arts District) to sell items sourced from BWS in their hotel gift shop to be featured at the Grant opening in October. We secured leverage from Arts AVL to partner with local historian Priscilla Robinson. BWS is partnering for the launch of her Urban Renewal Impact display of the Black History of Asheville's historic Southside. This includes sourcing the information and photos from her personal research and covering the cost of the production, printing, and installation. This is set for releasee and display during an event we call "Christmas in Southside: Enjoying the holiday with southside past, present, and future." We connected local Community Elder and businessman Todd Gragg to Rotary club and partnered to host a viewing of "Black in Asheville" Documentary at Asheville Community Theater. We were challenged by a team member having health challenges, but were able to recruit new members to help cover tasks to ensure program success and continuity. BWS member Clarence Robinson opened his new Brick & Mortar food business on Merrimon Ave,.</p>
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Quarter 2	<p>During this quarter we worked more deeply with entrepreneurs and finalized our Logic Model. We partnered with Thrive AVL to build capacity in our organization and create a framework for how to support the growth of Entrepreneurs. We engaged with Aisha Adams of Equity over Everything to direct the project and implementation. In response to the gap in BIPOC business participation in tourism, we created the GATE program (Greater Access to Tourism for Entrepreneurs) to house our efforts of increasing the participation of BIPOC businesses in the tourism economy. We enrolled 25 new businesses in this program. We partnered with Mountain Bizworks to facilitate helping these businesses get the education and funding they need. We partnered with the Doula of Entrepreneurship to provide culturally responsive intake that recognizes trauma and helps them move forward despite barriers. We also utilized Jeff Kaplan's E-13 assessment that is a national benchmark for entrepreneurial competencies. This assessment creates the curriculum for our work this year. Funding from this grant has been paired with other funds so that we can serve more people. One participant faced an emergency rent challenge after losing her job. We did not have a funding source to help, but referred her to other community agencies. None of them were able to help. As such, we began meeting with our partners and community supports to raise money for "barrier removal". While people of color are trying to build their businesses, they are also faced with the normally challenges of economic disparities in Buncombe County. One partner has experience with supporting entrepreneurs that face poverty and how to remove barriers to their success. Our next mile marker is the Ideas2Action meeting on January 26. We have engaged 25 tourism partners who will come an (1) learn about the disparities in our ecosystem (2) collaborate on how to engage more BIPOC businesses in the tourism industry. That same evening we will meet with the cohort members to review their plans for the year, outline their learning mile markers, and continue softskills training for entrepreneurs.</p>
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<p>Quarter 3</p>	<p>In January, we welcomed over 20 entrepreneurs, predominantly women, who brought a diverse array of backgrounds, education levels, and business ventures ranging from catering to wellness products and event planning. The cohort undertook an intensive onboarding process that included a detailed self-assessment and participation in the first monthly retreat, held on January 26, 2024. This initial phase was crucial as it provided the participants with a foundational understanding of the resources available within the community to support their business development and growth. Each member spent 8 hours of coaching with Nicole Lee to address the trauma they experience and strategize on how to overcome that trauma to further support the healthy growth of their businesses.</p> <p>Building on the momentum from January, the February cohort sessions demonstrated stronger engagement, especially from women entrepreneurs, with five out of the six businesses present being women-owned. This month's instructors were Nicole Lee, Aisha Adams, and Dr. Joseph Fox.</p> <p>We hosted the community driven Legacy Awards during Black History Month and had 224 people registered. This event highlighted the contribution of local people of color in Buncombe County. The community nominated 24 people and then 791 people voted on the nominees. Two of the honorees nominated and voted on from the community were Sapphire and Sistas Caring4Sistas with Interim Executive Director, Sheneika Smith. Nominees were featured on the cover of Urban News, The Speaker was Dr Oralene Graves Simmons, Founder and Executive Director of the MLK Association and we also recognized Johnnie Grant, Founder and Editor of the Urban News highlighting the significant achievements and recognition of our community.</p> <p>March saw further deepening of our program's impact with a focus on specialized knowledge and strategic business tools. We provided expert technical assistance, emphasizing the benefits of the E13 framework for programmatic outcomes, while Dr. Fox contributed significantly to enhancing the participants' understanding of customer profiles, thereby improving our collective marketing strategies. This session not only featured consistent attendance from our cohort members but also included community partners like Thrive AVL, Venture Asheville, Mountain Bizworks and The Asheville Watch Dog. One cohort member was awarded a grant for their business and another member was approved for a \$20k Business Loan from Mountain Bizworks and created one new job.</p>
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<p>Quarter 4</p>	<p>In April, BWS started strong with valuable insights from Sarah and Justin of JB Media, setting the stage for upcoming activities. We celebrated significant milestones such as Jazmin W. securing a \$20k loan from MBW and Calop completing his book, underscoring our members' diverse achievements.</p> <p>Jennifer King provided updates on volunteer opportunities for GRINDfest, our flagship event, while Dr. Fox delivered essential guidance on navigating business loans and grants, ensuring members had the support needed to succeed. GRINDfest stood out as a pivotal gathering, held last May 2024, drawing 44 vendors and 2,822 attendees from the community. This event not only showcased local entrepreneurial talent but also strengthened connections within Asheville's business ecosystem.</p> <p>GRINDfest contributes to the vision of a vibrant, healthy, and connected community by fostering positive connections for people of color. In fact, our sponsors and program partners had all agreed that the vendors and presenters would all be people of color so that all the support and attention would be directed to help bridge economic gaps in our community. In May we focused on marketing and operations, with Licensed Clinician, "MC" Ellis leading workshops on building business resilience, effective vending strategies, and leveraging volunteerism for business growth. June brought further enrichment through sessions with Kelly from Thrive AVL, highlighting opportunities for cohort members, and Justin Belleme's insights into maximizing business exposure on platforms like Romantic Asheville. The month concluded with a team-building exercise led by Nicole Lee, fostering cohesion and skill development among participants.</p> <p>Our Black Wall Street Jr participants were able to sell their items at Atlanta's Youth Fashion show and was invited back to show their fashion line.</p> <p>We also launched the Urban Renewal Impact display in Southside Asheville. This is an art collection with photos, maps, and title deeds collected by local historian and elder, Priscilla Robinson leading the project as a social enterprise. She collaborated with Todd Gragg, director of the Documentary, Black in Asheville and Mr Gilliam to produce this work on display at 346 Depot St. Funding for this work was leveraged with City of Asheville and Arts AVL.</p> <p>We hold a series of Urban Renewal Impact events with 170 registrants and speakers that Included, Renee White, Jacqueline Hallum, Priscilla Robinson, Sherriff Quentin Miller, Gene Bell, and former Mayor Terry Bellamy all sharing their perspectives of the local Black History of Asheville.</p>
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Progress toward annual goals

Measure	Annual Goal	Actual Results (Enter Data) Please only include new data for the specific quarter				Progress
		Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	
# of hours of technical assistance provided to members	100	50	225	183	71	529
# of new businesses created	5	1	0	0	10	11
Amount of revenue reported by cohort members via profit & loss (P&L) statements	\$ 250,000	\$ 136,764	\$ 193,488	\$ 198,479	\$ 104,239	\$ 632,970
# of people registered for local cultural events	1000	165	123	224	2992	3504

Comments:

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Use of funds to date and any budget considerations

Spending Category	Starting	Total Spending (Enter Data)				Amount
		Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	
Contractors	\$ 30,000	\$ 6,350	\$ 9,753	\$ 22,458	\$ 9,823	\$ (18,384)
Supplies/Materials	\$ 20,000	\$ 2,603	\$ 10,530	\$ 2,450		\$ 4,417
Black Wall Street Junior	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ 2,500	\$ 793		\$ 16,707
Admin			\$ 1,200	\$ 1,500	\$ 40	
Total	\$ 70,000	\$ 8,953	\$ 23,983	\$ 27,201	\$ 9,863	\$ 0

Comments: