

# Isaac Coleman Economic Community Investment

*Buncombe County's Isaac Coleman Economic Community Investment plan was created with the understanding that health, safety and wellbeing are culturally created rather than professionally prescribed.*

It is well documented that people and neighborhoods in Buncombe County are impacted by race, poverty, and trauma. These factors create barriers to success and wellbeing. From early on, these cumulative pressures impact children, hampering the development of the necessary skills to achieve self-sufficiency. We cannot leave this talent behind. We want every child in our community to realize their potential and contribute to our community.

Named for social justice champion Isaac Coleman, the Isaac Coleman Economic Community Investment plan offers targeted investments in our communities that are currently working to champion equitable opportunity. Our goal with this investment is to rebuild the health, safety, and self-sufficiency in our communities.

After a call for proposals, 22 were submitted and vetted through a very competitive process. Seven of the 22 grant applications were funded:

- United Community Development
- ABIPA – ABIPA Cares Cooperative

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YTL Training Program

- Emma Community Ownership Project
- My Community Matters Empowerment Program – Collaboration with Positive Changes and Asheville Writers in Schools/Word on the Street
- YTL Training Program
- Shiloh Community Association/Pearson Plan
- Deaverview: Residents, Schools and Community in Relationship

The Isaac Coleman Grant Review Group consisted of Buncombe County Commission Vice-chair Ellen Frost, Commissioner Al Whitesides, Antanette Mosley, Drew Reisinger, Dr. Dwight Mullen, Frank Castelblanco, Gene Bell, Dr. Tiece Ruffin, and Tracey Greene-Washington.

“The inclination to start the Isaac Coleman grants was due to community input. I think the most powerful and pivotal thing about them, in my mind as a Commissioner, is that the community led this,” says Ellen Frost. “I have high hopes because of the talent that exists in our community. On their own and with their own resources, people are working every day to build a better future. With the grants we saw how people have really taken ownership and been creative. Some of the best days of my time as a commissioner have been doing site visits and being able to hear directly from the community.”

Echoing those sentiments, Antanette Mosley added, “It was wonderful to see neighbors collaborating on solutions which would benefit their communities because they know better than anyone what will work for them. I was impressed that people were really engaged in moving things forward and having a say in their success stories.”

These investments are part of a broader approach, which includes continued partnerships with nonprofit and faith-based organizations, mini-grants to aug-



My Community Matters Empowerment Program – Collaboration with Positive Changes and Asheville Writers in Schools/Word on the Street.



ABIPA Cares Cooperative

ment emerging and innovative community efforts, support for small businesses, and investments in education and the economy. This mix of formal and informal approaches is intended to strengthen community infrastructure so that meaningful and sustainable change can take root.

“ABIPA is honored to be a recipient of funding for this highly competitive grant opportunity,” says Executive Director JéWana Grier-McEachin. “It will allow us to continue to innovate our service to, for, and with the residents of Buncombe County.”

“With the Isaac Coleman funds, Word on the Street can continue growing a space for young people to express themselves and to strengthen their leadership while developing tangible skills that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives,” shares Tamiko Ambrose Murray co-founder of Asheville Writers in Schools and the Community.

“This grant will afford YTL the opportunity to work with participants all year!” says Executive Director Libby Kyles. “It will also provide opportunities to expand how we collaborate with others to build wealth and security within our communities.”

**For more information about the Isaac Coleman Economic Community Investment plan, visit [buncombecounty.org](http://buncombecounty.org).**

## Vision

By focusing on these factors and harnessing the talents of community members, we can build a more robust workforce and more resilient neighborhoods.

### Improving Equitable Opportunity

- Pipelines to jobs
- Apprenticeships
- Self-sustaining businesses

### Connecting People

- Rebuilding trust
- Fostering a sense of “we”
- Building a can do sense that neighbors can work together to get things done
- Supporting emerging leaders

### Ensuring Positive Place

- Healthy public spaces that encourage gathering
- Gardens and walking trails
- Cultural identity that brings people together



**Buncombe County  
Health and Human Services  
[www.buncombecounty.org](http://www.buncombecounty.org)**