



# DANE COUNTY

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## **The 2025 Partners in Equity – Racial Equity & Social Justice Grant Awarded to Four Local Organizations**

MADISON — Dane County Executive Melissa Agard announced today that four local agencies have been selected to receive the Tamara D. Grigsby Office of Civil Rights 2025 Partners in Equity (PIE) Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Grants. Grants are intended to address systemic racial inequities in one of the following areas as it relates to criminal justice: health (including pandemic health-related responses), education, employment, and criminal justice.

“Every person in Dane County deserves the chance to thrive, and that means confronting and undoing the systems that have held too many of our neighbors back. These Partners in Equity grants invest directly in community-led solutions that lift up young people, support families, and advance justice. I’m grateful to each of these organizations for their leadership and for helping build a stronger, more inclusive Dane County.” — County Executive Melissa Agard

“Systemic racism is so embedded in systems that it often is assumed to reflect the natural, inevitable order of things. The Partners in Equity grant recipients are breaking the walls of inequity by serving children, youth, and adults in the areas of mentoring, academic support, workshops relating to environmental and social justice, and re-entry. These projects will advance equity and inclusion throughout the County.” — Greg Jones, Chair, Equity and Inclusion Advisory Board

“Our partners and grant recipients are building what our communities deserve: access, opportunity, support, and pathways that uplift people across every stage of life. Their work strengthens our County by investing in children, youth, and adults through mentoring, academic support, environmental and social justice education, and re-entry programming. These projects are expanding what is possible. They create spaces where people can grow, heal, learn, and lead. They reflect a commitment to belonging, dignity, and shared responsibility. This is equity in action. And because of these partners, our County is moving toward a stronger, more connected, and more inclusive future.” — Dr. Damira Grady-Saffold, Madison College

### **The 2025 PIE-RESJ Grant recipients include:**

AE CARES/MAYDM – \$20,000

AE Cares, in collaboration with Maydm, aims to address racial disparities in Dane County’s criminal justice system by expanding access to STEM education and wellness support for youth of color. By centering justice-impacted youth and embedding equity into every layer of programming, AE Cares and Maydm aim to disrupt intergenerational cycles of incarceration and exclusion, creating pathways

to healing, learning, and opportunity. This program will serve young people in grades 6–12, with intentional outreach to children of incarcerated parents. The program will offer quarterly STEM training cohorts, wellness events that integrate physical activity and mental health support, career advisory sessions, mentorship, and family engagement.

**BLACK GIRL MAGIC (BGM) – \$8,215**

The Black Girl Magic Legacy Program supports Black girls at Madison East High School to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally during this critical stage of development. The program provides mentorship, leadership development, and civic engagement opportunities for approximately 60 Black girls in grades nine through twelve. Weekly group sessions create a safe space to explore identity, build academic skills, and prioritize wellness. One-on-one mentorship helps students set goals, monitor progress, and prepare for postsecondary success. Students also participate in leadership and community projects to strengthen their voice and impact.

**EX-INCARCERATED PEOPLE ORGANIZING (EXPO) – \$15,000**

Ex-Incarcerated People Organizing (EXPO) is a peer-led grassroots organization committed to dismantling barriers faced by individuals returning from incarceration. By centering justice-impacted voices and partnering with community, county, and academic partners, EXPO works to reduce recidivism, increase access to services, and improve reentry outcomes. The program offers weekly peer support meetings and individualized sessions for Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous adults returning to their communities, with connections to essential wraparound services such as housing, employment, and health care assistance.

**MMSD WEST HIGH SCHOOL – \$7,500**

Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) and West High School will host the Equity Symposium in 2026, serving more than 2,200 students and 200 staff. The symposium expands on equity priorities identified by students and will include workshops on art and social justice, environmental justice, racism/antiracism, disability inclusion, equity in education, equity and the law, civic engagement, gender, sexuality, health equity, mental health equity, housing and food justice, identity, restorative justice, and workshops en español for Spanish-speaking multilingual learners.

To learn more about the Office of Equity and Inclusion and its mission, please visit:

<https://equity.danecounty.gov/grants>

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