



Impact Report 2026

Be Connected Durham & Beyond, Inc. • EIN 87-1870259 • Durham, NC 27707 (Hayti)
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From the Founder

For twelve years, Be Connected Durham has been one practice moving across many forms: exhibitions, public health, city planning, festivals, and policy. Over the last five, we built the organization those years told us we needed. This report is a record of that work and a statement of what it is ready to become. We are entering intentional capitalization, and BE WELL is the first full expression of it.

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Who We Are

Be Connected Durham & Beyond is a Black women-led 501(c)(3) public charity in Durham's historic Hayti. It emerged from Iset Excelsior dba Be Connected Durham, a twelve-year social practice that has moved more than \$1.7M into the Hayti District and greater Durham and shaped public systems from the city's equitable engagement blueprint to a \$10M community healing plan, known by placeholder title, the Durham Marshall Plan, for the historic Hayti District in Durham, NC. The nonprofit spent five years building the governance, programs, and methodology to carry that work at scale, and is now entering a phase of intentional capitalization. Through The Be Connected Method, we connect arts and culture, community knowledge, economic development, research, and systems design to advance relational repair, community wealth, and equitable systems change.

How We Work

Be Connected Durham runs lean by design. A three-person core multiplies through the same community structures the work is built on: FSC Fellows who live and operate on the Fayetteville Street Corridor, and interns from Duke University and North Carolina Central University. Capacity is not something we add on top of the work. It is produced by the work, through the people the work already trains and pays.

This is fractal by design. Our practice is grounded in adrienne maree brown's emergent strategy: the conviction that small-scale patterns set the pattern for the whole system. We build one thing well, at human scale, and design it to repeat, one firm, one fellow, one neighborhood, one framework at a time, until the pattern reaches the system. BE WELL is this logic made explicit: six firms, one hive, each business made whole so that the model of wholeness can scale. It is how a three-person practice authored a \$10M city plan and put two frameworks into municipal adoption. The output reflects the model, and the model is the method.

Our Theory of Change

When Black women are well and properly resourced, they build wealth that holds, and that wealth moves through whole communities.

- **The problem.** Black women's ability to build wealth cannot be separated from health, care, unpaid labor, and relationships, inside systems built on extraction and isolation. Black women are being pushed out of the labor market even as they lead the fastest-growing segment of U.S. entrepreneurs. Community knowledge goes unrecognized and uncompensated.
- **Our approach.** The Be Connected Method: we enter an ecosystem, listen for what is present, absent, and artificially separated, connect disciplines, people, and resources, design the conditions for something new, and leave infrastructure behind. In BE WELL, we operate as Firm Zero, building every tool and system in our own house first, then handing it to the businesses we serve.
- **What we invest.** Direct capital, legal and IP formalization, trauma-informed financial coaching, a facilitated curriculum, the Catherine Williamson Fellowship, and a structured evaluation framework.
- **What we do.** Run a multi-year cohort that stabilizes, cultivates, and scales Black women-led firms; document unpaid labor; and build relational repair into the work.
- **What changes.** Firms gain revenue, reduce debt, acquire assets, and improve credit; women reclaim hours lost to unpaid labor; relationships and civic capacity strengthen.
- **The long-term impact.** Black women-led businesses that can hold \$300,000 a year, community wealth that moves rather than concentrates, and a model built to replicate in rural and under-resourced communities across the United States of America.

What we believe: art and reciprocity are infrastructure, connection is medicine, lived experience is expertise, and healing is an inheritance.

Impact by the Numbers

- \$1.7M directed into the Hayti District and greater Durham since 2014.
- \$380,000 in wages paid to Black women residents.
- 48 residents hired, and 36 fellows trained and paid equitably.
- 2,600 residents served each year through Third Friday Hayti.
- 72% survey participation by Black and Latine residents on the Better Bus Project, a City of Durham record.
- 500 or more programs, exhibitions, and public engagements since 2014.
- 2025: 2,600 residents and 64 Black and Brown vendors served through Third Friday Hayti.

Systems We Have Built

The practice has repeatedly turned community knowledge into public infrastructure:

- **Equitable Community Engagement Blueprint**, co-authored by our founder and adopted by the City of Durham in 2018.
- **The \$10M Hayti Community Healing Plan**, also known as the Durham Marshall Plan, authored and chaired by our founder and approved unanimously by City Council in 2023.
- **Be Heard Durham**, a community-led research strategy that became the City of Durham's engagement platform, built with Cortico AI and Neighborhood Improvement Services.
- **Say Something Strong**, which awarded 15 or more grants to Black and Latine artists through the Durham County Department of Public Health's Bull City Strong initiative (2022 to 2024).
- **The FSC Fellows Project and Third Friday Hayti**, training 36 fellows and serving 2,600 residents a year.

This body of work is documented in a Johns Hopkins University case study and preserved as a public record of more than 500 works since 2014.

BE WELL: The Current Chapter

BE WELL is Be Connected Durham & Beyond's Black women's business viability accelerator, and the first full expression of the practice applied to economic sovereignty. Cohort 1 is live: six firms, one hive, meeting across a ten-session semester, with baseline data captured at the first session so every firm's growth is measured from day one.

- **Briana Brake**, East Durham Brewing Co. dba Spaceway Brewing: growth-stage for one of the first Black-woman-owned breweries in the U.S.; arts and music benefit and custom brew presentations.
- **Jacquina Michel**, Wonderpuff LLC: teahouse and community health social practice event and consumer product brand centering caregivers and people with disabilities.
- **Rachel Storer**, Gemynii: creative and educational studio for artists, social entrepreneurs, and DJs.
- **Karen Weaver**, Karen's Golden Era: established 32-year beauty enterprise. Catherine Williamson Fellow.
- **Courtney Reid Eaton**, A Black Center: curatorial, documentary arts center with 34 years of experience. Catherine Williamson Fellow.
- **Kimberly Arrington**, Firm 6: community welfare services coach and writer, transitions into the cohort by November 30, 2026, after completing a board development role.

The cohort pairs direct capital with the wraparound infrastructure most programs leave out: legal and IP formalization, trauma-informed financial coaching, a facilitated curriculum, and the Catherine Williamson Fellowship. Two of the six seats are always held for Black women ages 60 and over, because senior women are left behind most, and the Fellowship gives these elders a retirement and succession track so a lifetime of uncounsed labor converts into an asset. Named for Cat Williamson, whose caregiving was never a line item, it settles that ledger with reciprocity instead of extraction. The program runs on a five-year arc, from stabilization to cultivation to scale, toward a plain goal: each business holding \$300,000 a year.

How We Measure Impact

Growth is documented. Every firm is measured against a first-session baseline across three registers:

- **Economic:** revenue, debt reduction, asset acquisition, credit change, and survival.
- **Unpaid labor:** hours reclaimed, emotional labor redistributed, and uncompensated organizing reduced.
- **Healing and civic:** conflict resolution, relational repair, and collaboration durability.

This evidence base is designed to make the program's outcomes provable and to guide its expansion.

Stewardship and Accountability

We hold ourselves to the standard we ask of funders, and we have the record to show it. On August 31, 2026, Be Connected Durham & Beyond earned Candid's Platinum Seal of Transparency, its highest tier, completing Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum with our programs, financials, leadership, goals, and year-by-year impact metrics fully documented. The Platinum Seal is the transparency capstone of our five-year infrastructure build: the same formation years that produced our governance, programs, and methodology also produced a public, verified record at Candid's highest level. Earning it unlocked complimentary access to Candid's premium grant-research tools for our CEO and Director of Giving, extending our fundraising capacity at no cost. The clearest proof of

stewardship is the work itself: a live BE WELL cohort of six real firms, and more than 500 documented works since 2014.

Our governance is built to match that transparency. Our board was seated in 2026, and its first formal cycle is now underway. The first written CEO assessment, signed conflict-of-interest disclosures, and board self-assessment are scheduled within this inaugural governance cycle and will be reflected on our Candid profile as each is completed. We disclose where we are in the process rather than imply work already done, because transparency is the point of the Seal and the standard we hold ourselves to.

We built this while stabilizing the organization after the loss of committed public funds, which we are resolving independently. That we delivered a live cohort, a rebuilt communications infrastructure across both organizational websites, and a Platinum-verified public record on schedule is proof we stabilized and stayed on course.

The Road to Scale

It took five years to build the organization out of the body of work. Reaching scale is a comparable horizon. Our immediate need is a \$300,000 bridge to bring the six firms to full capitalization by November 30, 2026, and to restore operations. That bridge sits inside a \$1.5M Year One organizational goal, itself the first year of a five-year runway to bring the cohort, and the organization that holds them, to scale. Properly capitalized, this intelligence compounds.

Support the Work

To support Be Connected Durham & Beyond, or to start a capital conversation, contact Deryle A. Daniels, Jr., Director of Giving, at deryle@beconnecteddurham.org. Learn more at beconnecteddurham.org.