

**Asheville Merchants Fund
FY 2026 - 2028 Awards**

Eight Awards totaling \$780,000

\$105,000 over three years to **Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project** to support the economic recovery and resiliency of homegrown businesses and small farms in Buncombe County by providing responsive training and resources.

\$105,000 over three years to **Asheville-Buncombe Community Christian Ministry** to improve the economic prospects for homeless women living at Transformation Village through non-traditional training, basic education, and employment services.

\$75,000 over three years to **Children First/Communities in Schools of Buncombe County** to support its afterschool and summer programming provided at no cost to families of school-age children, allowing parents to participate in the workforce.

\$75,000 over three years to **IFB Solutions, Asheville Division** to expand a workforce development initiative that helps blind or visually-impaired individuals gain the skills needed to advance into higher-wage, in-demand positions.

\$105,000 over three years to **Irene Wortham Center** to launch a workforce initiative addressing the shortage of specialized early childhood educators trained to serve children with intellectual and developmental disabilities and medically-fragile conditions and to increase employees' earning potential.

\$105,000 over three years to **Pisgah Legal Services** to provide access to free legal assistance in Buncombe County that removes workforce participation barriers by restoring driver's licenses and expunging eligible criminal records for low-income individuals.

\$105,000 over three years to **Western North Carolina Community Health Services** to provide on-the-job training and credentialing that allows staff to earn higher wages in high-demand, mission-critical positions necessary to provide high-quality patient care.

\$105,000 over three years to **Working Wheels** to provide affordable automotive repairs to help low-income Buncombe County residents and families stay employed, stable, and self-sufficient.