

# CAPACITY BUILDING IN SUPPORT OF BIPOC FAMILIES IN BATTLE CREEK

grant report

2023-2024



# FAST FACTS

▶ **TIMELINE**

January 1, 2023-December 31, 2024

▶ **AWARD AMOUNT**

\$370,000

▶ **FUNDING PARTNER**

WK Kellogg Foundation

# WHO WE ARE

# ABOUT MLM

**Milk Like Mine (MLM) is a coalition that is dedicated to addressing disparities in their community, educating families, and empowering community in order to improve maternal and infant mortality throughout Battle Creek.** We provide direct birthing and breastfeeding support to families, facilitate support groups and childbirth education classes, host monthly coalition meetings for networking, and work on community advocacy. We focus on providing skilled lactation support to families of color so that support can be offered by providers that reflect the families they serve.

The evidence is clear that community-based support is the most effective. MLM is a trusted organization within the Battle Creek area, doing the work on community advocacy to address the larger more systemic issues of health disparities, specifically breastfeeding rates and infant mortality, through a justice lens in birth and breastfeeding with hospitals, employers, and community members. **Our responsiveness to the community's needs is consistently grounded in creativity while developing the services offered and provided to the community.**



# ABOUT MIBFN

Michigan Breastfeeding Network (MIBFN) advocates, educates, and community-builds alongside families and organizations for the advancement of an equitable, just, and breastfeeding-supportive culture. **We collaborate with organizations and individuals to bring about actionable, system-level changes that are centered on the diverse experiences of Michigan families with young children.**

We envision human milk feeding-supporters of every identity serving in solidarity with Black, Indigenous, and other marginalized folx, dismantling unjust and inequitable systems of oppression – white supremacy, patriarchy, and capitalism. We envision geographic and identity coalitions across Michigan in every community. And, to that end, we are working to support folx that have the skills and lived experience in the reclamation of traditional practices that were stolen from Black and Indigenous families, ensuring a community support model that is grounded in sisterhood and collaboration, making sure that entities are equipped for the long-term, and leading advocacy efforts rooted in community need that are driven by Local Breastfeeding Supporters. **We provide breastfeeding support organizations by offering strategic guidance, fiscal management, consulting services, community-rooted development, advocacy and leadership, communications and marketing, assistance with continuing education application management, presenting, and fiscal sponsorship.**



**"COMING INTO THIS WORK, I WAS BRAND NEW TO IT AND CREATING A VERY UNCONVENTIONAL PROGRAM. I WAS SCARED, UNSURE, AND DIDN'T REALLY KNOW WHO TO TRUST WITH MY VISION, FEARING THEY MIGHT TRY TO CHANGE IT. NOT ONLY HAS MIBFN STOOD BEHIND ME, BUT THEY ALSO ENSURED I RECEIVED THE RIGHT GRANTS TO STRENGTHEN OUR WORK WHILE PROVIDING THE SUPPORT NEEDED TO NAVIGATE THE PROCESS. I AM GRATEFUL FOR THE GUIDANCE, SUPPORT, AND SOLIDARITY THAT COMES WITH WORKING ALONGSIDE MIBFN!"**

**-RICKESHIA WILLIAMS, CLS, CLC, BD, CBE, MLM CO-FOUNDER**



# HOW THIS FINANCIAL SUPPORT ADVANCED OUR WORK

**MLM and MIBFN are committed to centering BIPOC families in every aspect of their work, ensuring that families receive the birth and breastfeeding support they need, deserve, and are entitled to.** This grant has been instrumental in enabling MLM to expand its services and hire additional staff, all in direct response to the evolving needs of the families they serve, further advancing equity and justice in maternal and infant health.

# ESTABLISHING SUSTAINABLE FUND DEVELOPMENT MODEL

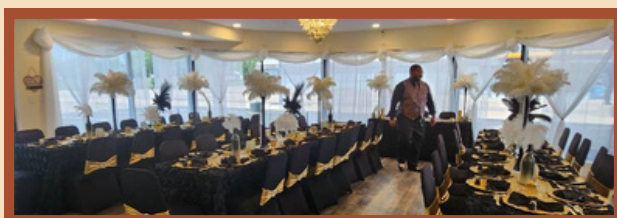
## FUNDRAISING GALA

MLM hosted a fundraising gala, celebrating the families served by MLM. **This event was unique in that the focus was on centering and honoring family awardees instead of providers.** This shifted the power back to the family, which is paramount and transformative towards justice and liberation.

Each awardee was nominated by their doula and MLM made sure that they were celebrated in a way that made them proud that they were not just surviving – they were thriving. The event was catered by a Black-owned business, Mitts 2 Pits. MLM staff, families, community members, and MIBFN joined together in 1920's attire to socialize, story tell, celebrate families, and fundraise.

**According to MLM Co-Founder Rickeshia, one of the most impactful moments was the presentation of the "Game Changer" award**, which was given to a birthing person whose experience led to policy changes at Bronson Battle Creek, specifically allowing doulas into the operating room—an achievement that directly returned the power to families and shifted power back from the healthcare system to those receiving care.

**Through intentional planning, powerful storytelling, and an atmosphere of solidarity, the evening was a testament to the collective journey toward equity and returning the power to BIPOC families.**





# BY LEVERAGING THIS AWARD, MLM WAS ABLE TO SECURE OTHER FUNDING SUPPORT

This project made it possible for MIBFN to serve alongside MLM on a number of different projects in a comprehensive way.

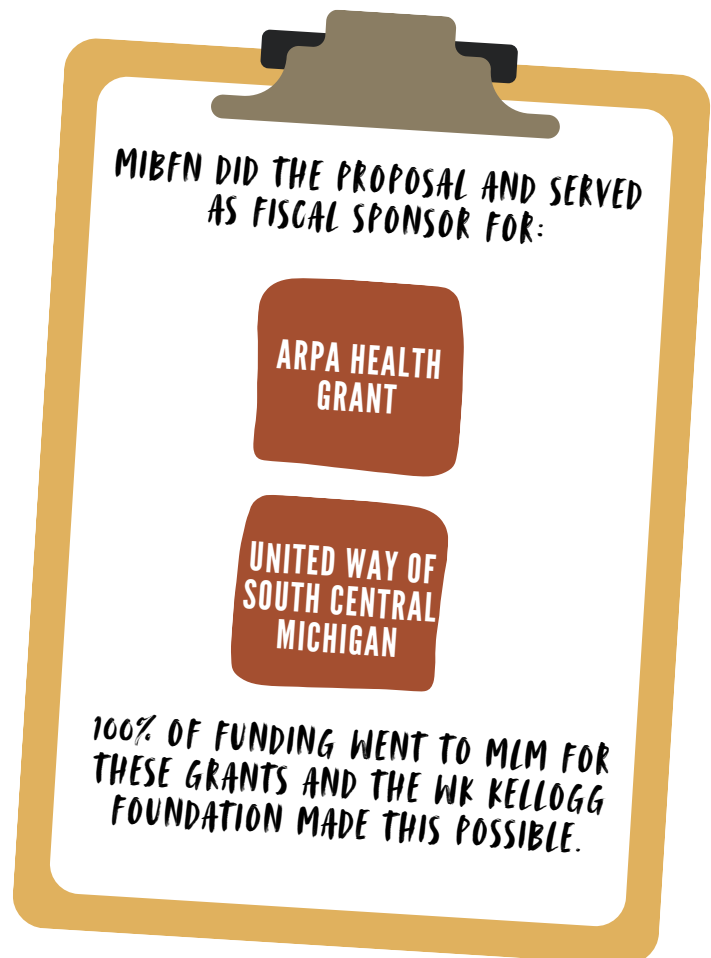
**BINDA  
FOUNDATION**

**UNITED WAY OF  
SOUTH CENTRAL  
MICHIGAN**

**MICHIGAN HEALTH  
ENDOWMENT  
FUND**

MIBFN identified these funding opportunities, submitted applications, coordinated funder meetings, managed grants, served as a fiscal sponsor, and led the evaluation process.

**WE ARE DEEPLY GRATEFUL TO THE WK KELLOGG FOUNDATION FOR THEIR ONGOING INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY-ROOTED, CLINICALLY-SKILLED BIRTH AND BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT THAT BENEFITS BIPOC FAMILIES IN CALHOUN COUNTY, IMPROVING MATERNAL AND INFANT EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES. FROM THE BOTTOM OF OUR HEARTS, THANK YOU.**



# FUND DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

MIBFN and MLM met together with potential funders to advocate for additional funding, co-created proposals, and co-developed a comprehensive fund development plan.



# LEVERAGING THIS AWARD FOR ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH AND COMMUNITY NEEDS

In addition to leveraging this award to secure further funding opportunities, we also enhanced our operational growth, successfully addressing key needs such as expanding the MLM team, creating social media content, restructuring roles within MLM, managing utilities, optimizing scheduling, improving accounting, and more.



**“HELPING THOSE THAT WE SERVE IS VERY REWARDING. YET, WATCHING THEM PAY IT FORWARD BY UPLIFTING AND ENCOURAGING OTHERS IS A JOY THAT CAN’T BE MEASURED!”**

**- CONNIE HUBBARD, CERTIFIED PERSONAL ASSISTANT, MILK LIKE MINE**



# INCREASING OUR VISIBILITY IN CALHOUN COUNTY

## BREASTFEEDING IN THE PARK

MLM held their annual Breastfeeding in the Park event to raise awareness for public human milk expression. Families were invited to come and gather in community while expressing human milk in whatever way worked best for them (breastfeeding, pumping, providing donor milk, etc.) while also enjoying food, ice cream, giveaways, and a breastfeeding booth. This community-rooted approach focused on community over competition by opening up additional partnership with the local health department and MLM.



## BLACK BREASTFEEDING WEEK

Milk Like Mine hosted a doula-baby reunion for any Black family who delivered or received lactation care. The event was family reunion-style with food, time in community, and a breastfeeding booth.

### 90 SECONDS

Amount of time families had in breastfeeding booth to share about their human milk feeding experiences (prompts provided on wall), which was recorded and compiled into a video

Click for recap of BBW



# OUTREACH ENGAGEMENT

We are very excited about MLM's new satellite clinic in Albion. Much of MLM's outreach and engagement efforts during this grant period were focused on their expansion into Albion. They were intentional and strategic about their community outreach including at Healthy Babies Day and a fundraiser in Albion.



**115 MARKET PLACE  
ALBION, MI 49224**



# INTRODUCING OUR WORK TO ELECTED OFFICIALS

In solidarity with—and at the request of—MLM, MIBFN created and implemented an advocacy strategy with state and federal legislators. This strategy included six meetings with legislators whose districts overlap with MLM’s service area and the provision of a one-page overview of MLM’s impact in their districts. These meetings served as an introduction to human milk feeding as a foundational practice in the reclamation of community health in BIPOC communities, highlighted how MLM is leading in this space, and emphasized why policy and budgetary decisions must positively impact MLM as well as the families they serve.



# PROMOTING MLM THROUGH MIBFN COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

MLM was extremely active on their social media posting newsletters, event calendars, podcasts on Facebook Live, and more to engage their audience. MIBFN shared MLM’s social media posts, amplifying any new programs, offerings, support groups and more to broaden the reach and highlight the work happening locally in Battle Creek.

MIBFN also highlighted and amplified MLM’s work in the Local Breastfeeding Supporter Meeting reports.



# ESTABLISHING ORGANIZATIONAL OPERATIONS WITH EQUITY AT THE CENTER

## NON-PROFIT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

MIBFN supported MLM in building up their own organizational capacity through:

### COACHING SESSIONS

MIBFN Executive Director Shannon McKenney Shubert, MPH, CLC, held coaching sessions with Rickeshia on organizational governance, annual filing forms, board composition, hiring practices, and more

### MENTORSHIP

Mentorship was provided by Jennifer Day, IBCLC to Rickeshia, an aspiring IBCLC, grounded in sisterhood and community



### DEVELOPMENT OF PRICING

Recognizing the importance of equitably compensating birth and breastfeeding supporters, we collaborated to develop a pricing schedule that reflects this commitment

### CREATION OF NEW PROGRAMS AND CURRICULA

New programs and curricula on human milk feeding were developed for instruction at a local hospital and high school



### PROCUREMENT OF A BUILDING

We worked together on the procurement of a building and MIBFN provided support for decisions around location, rent, and services within the space

**“OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, I’VE REALLY SEEN MYSELF AS AN ADVOCATE AND CHEERLEADER IN SOLIDARITY WITH MLM IN EACH OF THE PLACES AND SPACES WHERE I ADVOCATE FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE. IT IS ALWAYS REALLY EXCITING TO TALK ABOUT THE GREAT AND IMPORTANT WORK THAT MLM IS DOING BECAUSE THEY’RE SO RESPONSIVE. EACH TIME YOU CONNECT WITH SOMEONE WHO IS DEEPLY EMBEDDED IN WHAT IS HAPPENING IN BATTLE CREEK, EITHER THEY ALREADY KNOW ABOUT MLM OR ARE SOMEONE WHO IS DEEPLY INVESTED IN THE WORK THAT MLM DOES AND IT IS A NATURAL JUMPING OFF POINT FOR NEW PARTNERSHIPS.”**

**-SHANNON MCKENNEY SHUBERT, MPH, CLC, MIBFN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

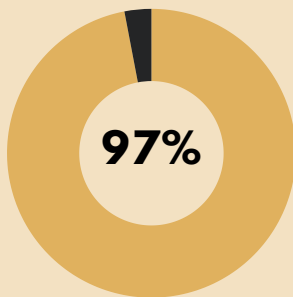




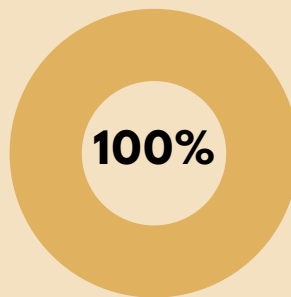
# CREATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PATIENT SURVEYS

We co-created and implemented patient surveys to assess how families who received MLM services during the grant period felt about their support. Moving forward, we will continue using this survey to gather feedback and enhance the quality of care we provide.

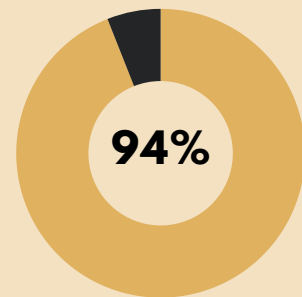
Overall Satisfaction



Lactation Satisfaction



Doula Satisfaction



n = 64

## CO-CREATION OF MLM DATA MANAGEMENT TOOLS

MLM and MIBFN co-created a reporting tool to document interactions with clients and manage data. In addition, MIBFN supported MLM in establishing a Milk Notes account for documentation of visits with families. This is important to ensure accurate tracking of client interactions and create a centralized system for documenting key information, which ultimately enhances service delivery, improves communication, and helps maintain consistent, high-quality support for families.



**“WORKING ALONGSIDE RICKESHIA WILLIAMS AS SHE BUILT AND LED HER ORGANIZATION WAS AN INSPIRING EXPERIENCE. AS THE FOUNDING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RICKESHIA BROUGHT AN UNMATCHED PURPOSE AND INTENTION TO HER WORK, CREATING A VISION THAT NOT ONLY SHAPED A POWERFUL TEAM, BUT ALSO LAID THE FOUNDATION FOR A LASTING LEGACY. HER LEADERSHIP EXEMPLIFIES WHAT IT MEANS TO LEAD WITH HEART, AUTHENTICITY, AND AN UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY IMPACT FOR THOSE THAT ARE MOST MARGINALIZED.”**

**-JENNIFER DAY, IBCLC, MIBFN COMMUNITY BUILDING PROJECT MANAGER**



# NEXT STEPS

# NEXT STEPS

To continue meeting the needs of the community and expanding our impact, **MLM is launching two major initiatives that require funding support:**

## MILK LIKE MINE PRODUCTIONS

- Fund the production, direction, and in-house filming of a docu-series on birth trauma and its long-term effects on reproductive choices.
- Support the ongoing development and expansion of the "SPILLIN' MILK LIKE MINE" podcast, amplifying community voices and advocacy efforts.
- Cover costs for equipment, editing software, production staff, and distribution to ensure high-quality, accessible content.



## MIDWIFERY TRAINING AND BIRTH CENTER DEVELOPMENT



- Invest in transforming our midwifery training center into a fully functional birth center, improving access to culturally-relevant, safe birthing options.
- Provide scholarships and funding for three staff members pursuing midwifery training and certification, strengthening the growth of Black and Indigenous midwives.
- Support operational costs, including facility upgrades, medical equipment, and staffing, to ensure sustainability and high-quality care.

**With your continued support, our ongoing work and these proposed initiatives will drive lasting change, improve birth and breastfeeding outcomes, and create a more just, equitable, and breastfeeding-supportive culture.**

**“WE HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE IN WORKING ALONGSIDE THE HOSPITAL SYSTEMS WE SERVE AND HAVE CREATED A TRUST THAT SADLY DOES NOT EXIST IN A LOT OF OTHER COMMUNITIES. THIS KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WE HAVE BUILT ALLOWS PARENTS TO HAVE BIRTHS THEY DO NOT HAVE TO FEAR AND, INSTEAD, CAN EMBRACE KNOWING THEY ARE SAFE.”**

**-CYNTHIA WIESCHOLEK, CERTIFIED BIRTH AND POSTPARTUM DOULA, MLM**

