

## Truist Foundation announces Where It Starts, a \$22M initiative to support small businesses and create career opportunities for communities of color

*CAEL, Living Cities and Main Street America named as anchor partners for the initiative*

CHARLOTTE, N.C., Jan. 30, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- [Truist Foundation](#) today announced the creation of **[Where It Starts](#)**, a \$22 million, multiyear program to strengthen small businesses and open career pathways for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals across the U.S. As part of *Where It Starts*, Truist Foundation awarded grants to three anchor partners, [CAEL](#) (the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning), [Living Cities](#) and [Main Street America](#), with CAEL receiving a previously announced \$15.7 million grant, and Living Cities and Main Street America today receiving a joint \$6.3 million grant.

Truist Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Bill Rogers and Truist Foundation President Lynette Bell joined CAEL President Earl Buford, Living Cities President and CEO Joe Scantlebury and Main Street America Interim President and CEO Hannah White to launch the initiative at Truist's Innovation and Technology Center at its headquarters in Charlotte.

"In collaboration with CAEL, Living Cities and Main Street America, we will remove barriers to growth and create pathways to opportunity," said Bell. "Tackling systemic, perpetual inequity starts by taking a whole-person approach. At Truist Foundation, this means partnering with organizations to look at individuals and their unique circumstances and co-creating a solution tailored to their specific need."

Alongside the foundation, CAEL, Living Cities and Main Street America will spearhead initiatives that connect to and advance the mission of *Where It Starts*. CAEL, a national nonprofit working to improve education-to-career pathways for adult learners, will launch ***Where It Starts: Build Better Careers***, a six-year initiative across Charlotte, N.C.; Memphis, Tenn.; and Miami, that prioritizes BIPOC and underserved communities by building career paths in professions and industries where these communities have been underrepresented, such as financial services.

"The support of Truist Foundation has profoundly extended the breadth, depth and reach of our mission, creating new ways to boost equitable economic mobility through improved education-to-career pathways for adult learners," said Buford.

With the Foundation's support, Living Cities, a member-collaborative working to close racial income and wealth gaps in the U.S., and Main Street America, an organization seeking to advance local community-led economic development, will lead a multi-year strategy, ***Where It Starts: Breaking Barriers to Business***, across Atlanta; Charlotte; Memphis and Nashville, Tenn.; and Miami. The program will uplift entrepreneurs of color by providing them with tools and resources as well as collaboration opportunities with community leaders to break down local systemic barriers for small business owners.

"Living Cities is honored to be a part of Truist Foundation's *Where It Starts* portfolio," said Scantlebury. "Our involvement reinforces and strengthens our commitment to progress economic opportunity for entrepreneurs of color in the Southeast. Partnering with Truist Foundation, Main Street America, CAEL, city leaders and community partners will help us facilitate wealth-building pathways and foster an economy where individuals and communities can thrive beyond a generation."

"We are thrilled to partner with Truist Foundation and Living Cities to work alongside community leaders and entrepreneurs of color to co-create more supportive environments," added White. "This new initiative also furthers Main Street America's long-term vision that everyone has access to an inclusive and resilient Main Street."

*Where It Starts* illustrates the importance of working together – across organizations and industries – to catalyze change, and this is just the start. This long-term initiative will continue to evolve and expand as Truist Foundation establishes more strategic partnerships with nonprofits and embeds itself throughout local communities to collaborate on innovative solutions that exemplify Truist's purpose to inspire and build better lives.

Learn more at [truist.com/foundation/WhereItStarts](https://truist.com/foundation/WhereItStarts).

### **About Living Cities**

Living Cities harnesses the collective power of prominent foundations and financial institutions to close racial wealth and income gaps in U.S. cities. Our staff, investments, convenings and networks support efforts that operationalize racial equity and inclusion in local government, create inclusive narratives, bring communities

together to devise and act on a shared vision for the future, and eliminate inequities in systems such as entrepreneurship, homeownership and access to capital. Learn more at [livingcities.org](https://livingcities.org).

#### **About Main Street America**

Main Street America (MSA) leads a collaborative movement that advances shared prosperity, creates resilient economies, and improves quality of life through place-based economic development and community preservation in downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts across the country. Over the past 40 years, MSA has spearheaded a transformational movement, working with 2000+ communities to revitalize and re-energize their downtown commercial districts. MSA is incorporated as the National Main Street Center, Inc. and is a subsidiary of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

#### **About CAEL, The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning**

Recognizing that adult learners are the backbone of the U.S. economy, CAEL helps forge a clear, viable connection between education and career success, providing solutions that promote sustainable and equitable economic growth. CAEL opens doors to opportunity in collaboration with workforce and economic developers, postsecondary educators, employers and industry groups, and foundations and other mission-aligned organizations. By engaging with these stakeholders, we foster a culture of innovative, lifelong learning that helps individuals, and their communities thrive. A national membership organization established in 1974, CAEL is a part of Strada Collaborative, a mission-driven nonprofit. Learn more at [CAEL.org](https://cael.org) and [StradaCollaborative.org](https://stradacollaborative.org).

#### **About Truist Foundation**

Truist Foundation is committed to Truist Financial Corporation's (NYSE: TFC) purpose to inspire and build better lives and communities. Established in 2020, the foundation makes strategic investments in nonprofit organizations to help ensure the communities it serves have more opportunities for a better quality of life. Truist Foundation's grants and activities focus on building career pathways to economic mobility and strengthening small businesses. Learn more at [truist.com/foundation](https://truist.com/foundation).

SOURCE Truist Foundation

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