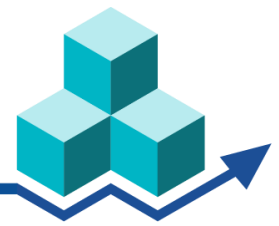




COOK COUNTY STARTING BLOCK GRANTS



Building Capacity, Supporting Growth

Equity in Grantmaking

In November 2021, Cook County established a special purpose fund for Equity and Inclusion – [the Cook County Equity Fund](#). The Equity Fund is dedicated to addressing historic and continued disparities and disinvestment in Cook County communities that are marginalized or have experienced other social and economic disparities. An Equity in Grantmaking Workgroup was convened and ultimately recommended \$5 million in initial funding for a capacity building grant initiative. The Cook County Justice Advisory Council (JAC) was selected to administer this grant initiative in partnership with the Office of the President.

In 2023, Cook County awarded \$5 million in Starting Block Grants funded via the Equity Fund (\$ 4 million) and the JAC Capacity Building budget (\$1 million). In line with the County's commitment to equity and expanding access to capacity building resources, additional funding was identified for a subsequent grant award cycle. In 2024, Cook County awarded nearly \$3 million in additional Starting Block Grants funded via the JAC and the Cook County Equity Fund.

Grant Overview

Cook County's Starting Block Grant initiative provides capacity building resources and support to community-based nonprofit organizations serving Cook County residents. Cook County Starting Block Grants support small to medium sized organizations looking to build internal capacity and develop their infrastructure to promote organizational health, growth and sustainability. This initiative goes beyond traditional grants for organizations to deliver services and allows them to focus on strengthening how they run, so that they can ultimately serve the community at a higher-level. Starting Block Grants support organizational capacity building projects ranging from strategic planning to staff training, accounting, database and technology improvement and more.

The grant opportunity is opened to community-based organizations in diverse sectors, including Arts and Culture, Community and Economic Development, Education, Health and Human Services, and Violence Prevention. To be considered eligible to apply, organizations were required to be headquartered in Cook County, serving Cook County residents, have non-profit (501c3) status and an annual operating budget under \$1 million and have at least three years of experience working in communities.

Response & Selection Process

The JAC received 365 applications from organizations headquartered in 16 of the 17 Cook County commissioner districts. Trained interagency review panels consisting of 53 reviewers across 24 departments, reviewed the 326 applications that passed the initial technical review. 148 of those 326 applications were unanimously recommended by all reviewers. In December of 2023, 51 top-scoring applicants were recommended for an award in the first funding cycle and 50 organizations were awarded.ⁱ In May 2024, Cook County initiated a second funding cycle, recommending the next 31 top-scoring applicants for grant awards.

Grant Awards

Awarded organizations receive up to \$100,000 in funding for capacity building over two years. Cook County awarded Starting Block Grants to 50 organizations in 2023 totaling \$4,880,207. The second cycle of funding awarded to 31 organizations in 2024 totaled \$2,958,555. The total amount of funding allocated to support community-based organizations through both funding cycles is \$7,838,762.

Awardee Summary – Funding Cycle 1

Awardee	Primary Service Sectors	Award Amount
A & L Youth and Family Services	Community and Economic Development, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
A House In Austin	Education, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies), Family Support Services	\$100,000.00
Annie B. Jones Civic Arts Center	Arts and Culture, Education, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
BandWith Music Ltd. (d/b/a BandWith Chicago)	Arts and Culture, Community and Economic Development, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$96,936.00
Bridge to Freedom	Housing, Reentry	\$92,800.00
Bridging the Gap Communal Living	Community and Economic Development, Human Services, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$99,984.00
Center for Companies That Care	Education	\$100,000.00
Changing Oasis Inc	Community and Economic Development, Education, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance (CAFHA)	Housing, Human Rights	\$87,935.34
Chicago Blues Revival	Arts and Culture, Community and Economic Development, Education	\$100,000.00
Chicago Community and Workers' Rights (CCWR)	Community and Economic Development, Workers Rights	\$100,000.00

Chicago Jazz Philharmonic	Arts and Culture, Education	\$66,000.00
Chicago Learning Exchange	Education	\$100,000.00
Chicago Urban Art Retreat Center	Arts and Culture, Human Rights, Social Justice Activism & Awareness	\$100,000.00
College Mentoring Experience	Education, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies), Workforce Development, Mentorship	\$100,000.00
Community Television Network (CTVN)	Arts and Culture, Education, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
Corazón Community Services	Arts and Culture, Health, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
Definition Theatre Company	Arts and Culture, Community and Economic Development, Education	\$100,000.00
Floating Museum	Arts and Culture, Community and Economic Development	\$99,942.08
Focus Fairies Mentoring	Community and Economic Development, Education, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$98,956.82
Free Root Operation	Community and Economic Development, Health, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
GirlForward	Education, Human Services, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
GoSTEM Guild of Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics	Education, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
GSJ Family Life Center	Community and Economic Development, Education, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
Healing to Action	Human Rights, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
Jehovah Jireh #1 Outreach Ministry	Human Services, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00

John Howard Association of Illinois (JHA)	Human Rights	\$100,000.00
Kitchen Possible Inc	Education, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies), Social & Community Context	\$99,850.00
Latino Union of Chicago	Community and Economic Development, Human Rights	\$100,000.00
LEAP	Education	\$99,285.00
Light of Loving Kindness	Health, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies),	\$100,000.00
M.E.A.N. Girls Empowerment	Education, Health, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
Mentoring Youth Through Technology	Education, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
New Eclipse Community Alliance	Community and Economic Development, Human Services, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
New Life KNEW Solutions	Human Services	\$100,000.00
One Solution Foundation, Inc	Education, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
Otherworld Theatre Company	Arts and Culture	\$100,000.00
Parenting for Non-Violence	Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$68,775.00
Pro Bono Network	Human Rights, Human Services	\$99,013.80
R.A.G.E. FOUNDATION, INC.	Community and Economic Development, Education, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$99,008.50
Rainbows for All Children	Human Services	\$80,574.00
Science & Entrepreneurship Exchange (DBA: SparkShop)	Education	\$100,000.00

SitStayRead	Education	\$92,000.00
Snow City Arts	Arts and Culture, Education, Health	\$100,000.00
Strengthening A Nation	Arts and Culture, Education	\$100,000.00
Territory NFP	Arts and Culture, Community and Economic Development, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
The Firehouse Dream	Youth Development	\$100,000.00
The Monroe Foundation	Community and Economic Development, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies), Reentry Programs	\$99,146.56
Un Nuevo Despertar - A New Awakening NFP	Health, Human Rights, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
Urban Male Network	Community and Economic Development, Education, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00

Awardee Summary – Funding Cycle 2

Anticipated Awardee	Primary Service Sectors	Award Amount
BA NIA Incorporated	Community and Economic Development, Education, Health	\$100,000.00
Black Researchers Collective	Community and Economic Development, Education, Human Rights	\$100,000.00
Chicago Austin Youth Travel Adventures Inc.	Arts and Culture, Education, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$99,854.00
Chicago Cultural Performing Arts & Media Alliance	Arts and Culture, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$97,574.40
Chicago Dance History Project	Arts and Culture, Education	\$100,000.00

Chicago Lawndale Amachi Mentoring Program (LAMP)	Education, Human Services, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
Co-op Ed Center	Community and Economic Development	\$67,196.00
EMMAUS	Human Services	\$100,000.00
Evanston ASPA	Arts and Culture, Education, Human Services	\$100,000.00
Filipino American Council of Greater Chicago	Arts and Culture, Community and Economic Development	\$100,000.00
*Black Midwifery Collective	Education, Health, Human Rights	\$99,600.00
Hope Center Foundation	Housing, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies), Workforce development	\$100,000.00
I Am A Gentleman	Education, Human Services, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$58,650.00
Junior League of Chicago	Community and Economic Development, Education, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$69,838.00
LatinX Digital Leaders Now	Community and Economic Development, Education	\$100,000.00
Light Up Lawndale	Community and Economic Development, Housing, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
Lighthouse Foundation of Chicagoland	Arts and Culture, Community and Economic Development, Health	\$100,000.00
Medical Careers Exposure and Emergency Preparedness Initiative	Education, Health, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
Minds Matter Chicago	Education	\$100,000.00
Play Smart Literacy	Education	\$100,000.00

Praize Productions Inc. NFP	Arts and Culture	\$88,400.00
Shorefront Legacy Center	Arts and Culture, Education, Human Rights	\$100,000.00
Sista Afya Community Care NFP	Health, Human Services	\$100,000.00
Strengthening Our Community Alliance	Education, Health, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
Taking Back Our Lives	Education, Human Services, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$97,792.97
The ACE Project	Community and Economic Development, Education, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
The CHORE Foundation	Community and Economic Development, Education, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$ 99,650.00
The Miracle Center	Arts and Culture, Human Services, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
ULON	Community and Economic Development, Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)	\$100,000.00
Water People Theater	Arts and Culture, Education	\$80,000.00
You Matter 2	Community and Economic Development, Education	\$100,000.00

¹ *Originally recommended for cycle 1 funding under previous name 'Holistic Birth Collective.' Award paused pending organizational administrative changes and grant award proceeding in cycle 2.
