



THE CHICAGO COMMUNITY TRUST
AND AFFILIATES

Requests for Proposals to the Our Great Rivers Fund at The Chicago Community Trust

RFP Release Date:	November 11, 2019
Information Sessions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• November 20, 2019 5:30-7:00 p.m. location TBD Hosted by Metropolitan Planning Council. <i>Please RSVP to Chloe Gurin-Sands at cgurinsands@metroplanning.org by Nov. 18th.</i>• December 11, 2019 12:30 – 2 p.m. at The Chicago Community Trust. <i>Please RSVP to Cora Marquez cmarquez@cct.org by Dec. 6th.</i>
LOI Deadline:	January 6, 2020 at 11:59 p.m.
Workshop: <i>Please hold this date if invited to submit a full proposal</i>	January 13, 2020, 9 - 11 a.m., at City Hall
Full Application Deadline:	February 14, 2020 at 11:59 p.m.
Site Visits:	February 28, 2020 – March 20, 2020
Funding Decisions:	April 24, 2020
Announcements:	May 8, 2020

Background:

In 2014, The Chicago Community Trust met with rivers advocates to think through long-term approaches to restoring ecological integrity to the river system. Because of the efforts of many individuals, Chicagoans were celebrating improved water quality and the return of wildlife to parts of the system. But was an ecological agenda sufficient to unlock the full potential of Chicago's extensive network of rivers and tributaries? Out of these conversations came the recognition that resident-led community and economic development could accelerate environmental progress. Over time, new uses on and along the rivers would depend on a system that is clean and healthy.

In 2015, the City of Chicago and a team of partners led by Metropolitan Planning Council launched [Great Rivers Chicago](#), a long-term initiative that undertook as its signature task a visioning process for the Chicago, Calumet and Des Plaines rivers and tributaries within City of Chicago boundaries. After 15 months and nearly 100 public events, the partners synthesized the thoughts and ideas of more than 6,000 residents into the [Great Rivers Chicago vision](#), the city's first ever comprehensive vision for the entirety of its river system.

Since the formal launch of Great Rivers Chicago in 2016, 15 community-led initiatives have formed projects along stretches of the river system. At last count, approximately 60 organizational and institutional partners were involved in these [collaborations](#), making Great Rivers Chicago a unique place-based initiative that uses a city-wide asset to bring diverse interests together across many communities. The Trust is among several partners providing financial support for the projects and funding technical support through the Metropolitan Planning Council.

Now, in Our Great Rivers' third year, the Trust is calling for community-led proposals that align with the [Productive Rivers](#) "theme" of the vision. The primary geographic focus of this funding opportunity is Chicago's majority Black and Latinx riverfront communities with sustained underinvestment, and [adjacent suburban municipalities](#) that share a boundary with Chicago and have one of the rivers included in the vision.

Need/Opportunity Statement:

Despite immense wealth in Chicago and World City status, large swaths of the South and West sides suffer from underinvestment due to population loss, changes in the industrial economy, environmental degradation, and other factors. Struggling areas are often riverfront communities, particularly along the heavily industrialized Calumet and Little Calumet rivers and the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. Racial segregation exacerbates the issue by structurally locking out community-driven investment. According to the [Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning](#), annual median household income in Chicago's 32 riverfront community areas ranges from \$13,345 in largely African American Riverdale on the far South Side to \$110,365 in largely White Forest Glen on the Northwest side. In South Chicago, 28.5 percent of land is vacant, compared to 0.3 percent in Forest Glen. The heavily Latinx Lower West Side has the highest industrial land acreage at 26.2 percent, and the Loop has the lowest with 0.1 percent. With over 150 miles of riverfront property abutting Chicago's river system, 394,000 residents living within a half-mile of a river and 633,827 jobs within a half-mile of a river (50.2 percent of all jobs in Chicago in 2015), using the rivers as a driver of equitable 21st-century investment is good for region.

Fortunately, there is precedent for engaging this former industrial workhorse. Ping Tom Park, the Chicago Riverwalk and the boathouses are contemporary demonstrations of urban rivers as post-industrial assets. More emergent efforts include [Calumet Connect](#), a community planning process to connect Southeast Side neighborhoods to each other and to the Calumet River, and [H2NOW Chicago](#), which pilots real-time water sensor technology that will greatly inform how and when communities interact with the rivers. The [Great Rivers Chicago vision](#) is the contextual roadmap to scale such ideas throughout the system. Currently, these and other projects are advancing 18 of the vision's 26 goals toward implementation.

Goals and Outcomes:

The Chicago Community Trust has committed to the [goal](#) of closing the racial wealth gap by increasing the share of economic prosperity for Black and Latinx individuals and households. [Community-driven investment](#) is one of five strategies being deployed by the Trust to help achieve the goal. Defined as strategic investments made by, for and with community for the purpose of attracting and deploying socially driven financial capital, community-driven investment aims to improve local and regional economies where conventional market activity does not fully meet community needs.

The Trust's Community-Driven Investment strategy looks to "catalytic assets" as one of the drivers of local investment. Every community has assets—human, institutional, built, natural. For some communities, the asset is a vacant school or warehouse ripe for repurposing. For others, it is a commercial corridor with transit access or the transit station itself. And for others, an anchor institution, ready-made workforce, or cultural amenity are the assets with the greatest promise for attracting financial capital. The asset driving this funding opportunity is Chicago's river system. As such, the Trust is calling for ideas to advance the [Productive Rivers](#) goals of the Great Rivers Chicago vision, which is articulated as follows:

Our rivers will be productive: They have historically been and will continue to be working rivers that are transportation arteries, commercial corridors and tourism generators.

Where economic activity is the best use of riverfront land, we'll work to retain existing businesses that rely on the water and attract new types of entrepreneurs and jobs, while preserving the integrity of the water and the culture of surrounding communities. We'll enhance our rivers' transportation infrastructure to accommodate barges, tour boats, water taxis and recreational watercraft. Together, business, community, government and civic leaders will create innovative riverfront development that harmonizes the needs of people, businesses and nature.

We encourage you to spend time in the vision document to learn more about the [Productive Rivers](#) goals.

Priority Strategies and Activities:

Our Great Rivers applicants must advance most of the Priority Strategies and Activities outlined in this section. Please refer to them often during the proposal writing process.

- Advance the goals of the [Productive Rivers](#) “theme” of the Great Rivers Chicago vision. Proposals with the greatest promise of attracting financial capital to communities will be most competitive.
- Utilize collaborations across communities and sectors (i.e., public, private, nonprofit). Proposals without robust partnerships will not receive funding.
- Emphasize co-benefits across topic areas (e.g., promoting economic development that preserves the integrity of the water and community culture). Proposals with singularity of purpose will not receive funding.
- Prepare communities to transition land to new and sustainable uses that equitably grow the economy.
- Advance the goals and leverage the resources of existing community/municipal planning processes and place-based initiatives such as [Opportunity Zones](#), the [Industrial Corridor Modernization Initiative](#), [Neighborhood Opportunity Fund](#) corridors, [Chicago Prize](#) initiatives, [Invest South/West](#) initiative, and others.
- Address systemic barriers through policy change, engagement with public officials and agency leaders, partnerships with the private sector, or the creation of innovative and replicable process, approach or structural solutions for community-driven investment.
- Position the rivers as catalysts for equitable community-driven investment in majority Black and Latinx communities (i.e., development without displacement).

Grantmaking Criteria:

The following criteria will factor into proposal evaluation:

- Alignment with Priority Strategies and Activities outlined above.
- Creativity and innovation of project.
- Ability of project to launch and replicate or scale, including sustainable funding sources beyond year one.

- Firmness of partnerships. Commitments from key partners, including elected officials and public agencies, must be confirmed through letters of support. Projects of similar topic or geographic overlap may be asked to combine efforts.
- Financial health, leadership and governance of the lead organization or fiscal agent.
- Demonstration of a community-led structure.
- Commitment of the team to racial and ethnic diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Geographic eligibility: Chicago and suburban communities that share a land or river border with the City of Chicago and have a river or tributary identified in the Great Rivers Chicago vision. Proposals must demonstrate a direct and proximate impact on the rivers. A map of eligible geographies can be found [here](#).
 - ***Using a Google Maps tool, applicants are required to upload a map of the location and geographic boundaries of the project (upload in the “Additional Documents” tab).***

Grant Amounts Available and Grant Term:

The Chicago Community Trust will make up to 15 grants under this opportunity. Given the complexity and ambition of the Productive Rivers goals, grant awards will be between \$50,000 and \$150,000 (previous awards were capped at \$100,000). Grant recipients will be expected to meet the Trust's requirements for the submission of financial and narrative reports at the end of the annual grant cycle, including a final report.

Eligible Applicants:

To be eligible for a grant award, an applicant must be:

- A nonprofit organization with evidence that it (a) has been recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as an organization described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Code; (b) is fiscally sponsored by a Section 501(c)(3) organization; (c) or is a governmental unit within the meaning of Section 170(c)(1) of the Code;
- Described in Section 170(b)(1)(A) of the Code, other than a “disqualified supporting organization” within the meaning of Section 4966(d)(4) of the Code.

Sponsored organizations without 501(c)(3) status must identify their fiscal sponsor as soon as possible and ask them to complete an organization profile in The Chicago Community Trust's grants management system, GrantCentral, prior to the sponsored organization's application submission. Fiscal sponsors must log in and complete and certify an organization profile in GrantCentral at <https://cct.smartsimple.com> prior to application submission.

Ineligible Uses:

The following conditions make a proposal ineligible for this funding opportunity:

- Proposals that do not reflect the Priority Strategies and Activities outlined above.
- Proposals that do not abide by the Grantmaking Criteria outlined above.
- Applicants who do not meet the Eligible Applicants requirements outlined above.
- Proposals with large capital expenses (e.g., motorized vehicles, building construction, infrastructure). Equipment and supply necessities are normal expense items for most projects.

Evaluation and Learning:

Sharing successes or challenges in achieving measures of progress is critical to our collective learning, decision-making and impact.

The Trust is committed to achieving our long-term goals and outcomes. We are developing outcome measures both internally and with our partners that inform progress towards our shared mission. Your project outcomes should be informed by why you think the project or strategy will lead to the anticipated result or long-term change (i.e., your theory of change). After you identify those outcomes, we are asking grant applicants to develop specific, time-limited measures of progress. For shorter-term grants (one year), these outcomes may not be achieved during the duration of the project. Measures of Progress provide measurable and reportable evidence that a proposed project and/or organization has effectively achieved its objectives, or is on the path to achieving them. These are what can be measured during the term of the grant period and contribute to your longer-term outcomes and are aligned to the Trust's strategic priorities. We also recognize that there could be challenges to the implementation of any grant, many of which are not under the control of grant recipients, which may prevent you from achieving your targets. Learning with you about the progress made towards your outcomes and measures is part of the Trust's evaluation and learning efforts.

Metropolitan Planning Council is working to evaluate the short-term successes and long-term impacts of the Our Great Rivers projects by tracking outcomes across the various policy, planning and programming efforts. The types of measures Metropolitan Planning Council is tracking with the project teams include community resident perceptions about the river/riverfront, media coverage and public awareness, activity and usage of river areas, economic impact in the surrounding area, relationships formed and leveraged, additional funding leveraged, and organizational capacity building.

Collection of Demographic Data:

The Trust asks that grant-seekers provide demographic data on board and staff as well as clients/beneficiaries of programs and services. The Trust believes the board and staff composition of grantees should be inclusive and reflect the diversity of the demographics of the region and the individuals they serve. Diversity for the Trust encompasses but is not limited to ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation and identification, age, economic circumstance, class, disability, geography, and philosophy. For this reason, the Trust does take into consideration the demographic make-up of the board, staff and clients of a grant applicant as an important proposal evaluation criterion.

Outcomes and Measures of Progress Chart Instructions (Applies only if invited to submit a full application):

- a) Define the outcomes for the project or the organization aligned with the funding opportunity. **You must include the outcome listed below as well as any additional outcome you determine. (Measures of Progress included).**

Outcome(s)	Measure of Progress
<p style="text-align: center;">Increase the use of community assets that serve as catalysts for community financial investment</p>	<p>Collaboration: # of partner organizations retained over the duration of the grant</p>
	<p>Collaboration: # of local organizations represented within the partnership</p>
	<p>Collaboration: # of private-sector partners involved with the project</p>
	<p>Financial Capital (Public): \$ of total public funding secured by all partners to achieve the goals of the partnership</p>
	<p>Financial Capital (Philanthropic): \$ of total philanthropic grant funding secured by all partners to achieve the goals of the partnership</p>
	<p>Financial Capital (Inclusive Private): \$ of total inclusive private funding secured by all partners to achieve the goals of the partnership</p>

Application Process:

This year, the application process will have two steps: a letter of inquiry (LOI) phase and a full application phase. Pending LOI reviews by the Trust, select LOI applicants will be invited to submit the full application. All LOI applicants will be notified whether they will be invited to submit the full application, and invited applicants will be given ample time to complete the full application.

Applicants must complete their application in GrantCentral, The Chicago Community Trust’s online grants management system. To access an application, grant seekers must log into GrantCentral at <https://cct.smartsimple.com>.

Applicants must complete an Organization Profile, which is on the last tab in their GrantCentral account. If the Organization Profile was completed for a previous funding opportunity, it must be reviewed and, if needed, updated and certified prior to application submission.

Sponsored organizations without 501(c)(3) status must identify their fiscal sponsor as soon as possible and ask them to complete an organization profile in GrantCentral prior to the sponsored organization’s application submission. Fiscal sponsors must log in and complete and certify an organization profile in GrantCentral at <https://cct.smartsimple.com> prior to application submission.

Late or incomplete LOIs or full applications will not be considered. Applicants may receive a site visit, telephone call, or other communication from Trust staff as part of the application review process.

Submission Deadlines and Other Key Dates:

- The LOI deadline is January 6, 2020. The LOIs will be reviewed by a committee of reviewers from The Chicago Community Trust.
- Applicants will be notified by January 10, 2020 if they are invited to submit a Full Application. Those applicants who will not be invited to submit a full application will also be notified by this date.
 - *If invited to submit a full application, please hold January 13th, 9:00 – 11:00 a.m., for a workshop hosted by River Ecology and Governance Task Force at City Hall.*
- The full application deadline is February 14, 2020. The full applications will be reviewed by the same review committee as the LOIs.
- Site visits will be conducted by review committee members between February 28th and March 20th.
- Funding decisions will be made by April 24th.
- Applicants will be notified of awards by April 28th. Those applicants who were invited to submit a full application but are not chosen for funding also will be notified at this time.

Information Sessions:

- November 20, 2019
5:30-7 p.m. location TBD. Hosted by Metropolitan Planning Council. *Please RSVP to Chloe Gurin-Sands at cgurinsands@metroplanning.org by Nov. 18th.*
- December 11, 2019
12:30 – 2:00 p.m. at The Chicago Community Trust. *Please RSVP to Cora Marquez cmarquez@cct.org by Dec. 6th.*

Contact Information:

For technical questions about GrantCentral, contact email grants@cct.org.

For content questions, contact Michael Davidson, Senior Director of Community Impact at mdavidson@cct.org, and/or Cora Marquez, Impact Coordinator at cmarquez@cct.org.

About the Our Great Rivers Fund at The Chicago Community Trust:

In September 2019, the Executive Committee of The Chicago Community Trust approved a bold strategic plan to create a thriving, equitable and connected Chicago region. A key aspect of that strategic vision is the ability of the Trust to connect donors to opportunities to create impact through their philanthropy. An early and exciting example of this goal to connect philanthropy to opportunity is the Our Great Rivers Fund. The Trust established the Our Great Rivers Fund to promote and advance Great Rivers Chicago and, more specifically, to inspire and engage donors and stakeholders in this work. The Our Great Rivers Fund connects donors who care deeply about the relationship between healthy river systems and thriving communities to opportunities to pool charitable investments for greater impact through grantmaking. To date, donors have contributed more than \$1 million to the Our Great Rivers Fund to support and advance this important work.