Changemakers Network Request for Proposals
Frequently Asked Questions

**Eligibility**

1. **Our community organizing budget is less than $2.5 million but our organizational operating budget exceeds that. Are we eligible to apply?**  
   This funding opportunity is designed to support small to medium-sized independent community-based organizations with operating budgets of $2.5 million or less.

2. **Our fiscal sponsor’s operating budget is more than $2.5 million. Is my organization still eligible for this grant?**  
   Yes, as long as the organization’s operating budget is $2.5 million or less.

3. **Is there a preference between place-based, citywide or regional organizing?**  
   As a community foundation, we serve the entire Chicago region. Community organizing agencies in the city and suburban areas are eligible to apply. This RFP is meant to enhance the capacity of community organizers to engage and activate more residents. Thus, we will prioritize community organizing entities that are place-based. Our belief is that more engaged, more active residents in communities leads to enhanced community capacity, new forms of leadership and increased community ownership.

4. **Are coalitions eligible for this grant?**  
   Coalitions are not discouraged from applying. If there is a needed capacity across all of the member organizations, we would consider it. However, only one organization will receive the funds and is not permitted to re-grant. Also, the coalition will need to determine and identify the two participants for the community of practice. This grant is very specific to enhancing the community organizing efforts of an organization. Again, while we do not discourage coalitions from applying, we will have a preference for independent, place-based organizations.

5. **How long do groups need to be established before being eligible for grants?**  
   We do not have an age requirement for organizations. However, we do need verification of an organization’s 501(c)3 status. If the organization is not a 501(c)3, it will require a fiscal sponsor in order to apply for a grant. For this particular RFP, we will need organizations to articulate their experience in organizing as this RFP is meant to support organizations that have been organizing in communities for years. This RFP is not intended for organizations that want to incorporate organizing into their work.

   a. **What do you mean by “organizing in communities for years”?**  
      We are looking for organizations that have been organizing in their communities for an extended period of time. While we do not have a specific threshold, an organization should be able to articulate their history of successes and
challenges, as well as how this grant will address its needs and growth opportunities.

6. **Can two organizations apply together?**
   We want organizations to do what is best for them. If applying together makes sense for the residents they are serving, then they should submit a joint proposal. However, only one organization will receive the funds and is not permitted to re-grant. Also, both organizations will need to determine and identify the two participants for the community of practice.

7. **Are organizations with status other than 501(c)3 status, such as L3C or 501(c)6, eligible to apply?**
   This RFP is only open to 501(c)3 organizations. If organizations do not have nonprofit status they will need a fiscal sponsor.

8. **Our organizing work is more focused on advocacy. Are we still eligible?**
   There are various forms of organizing. We will be funding organizations that organize as follows:

   ● Catalyzing the power of individuals to work collectively to make the change they want to see in their communities;
   ● Cultivating leaders, identifying their interests and creating the conditions and capabilities for them to lead; and
   ● Leveraging existing assets in the community.

   Ultimately, we want to see active residents leading and advocating for their communities.

**Proposal Evaluation**

9. **How will you be evaluating proposals?**
   We will only consider proposals that meet the following criteria:
   ● Organizations and community organizing leaders who reflect, serve and amplify the voices of community members from across Chicago, with an emphasis on communities that are historically underrepresented in civic discourse;
   ● Organizations led by and/or predominantly staffed by individuals representing communities most affected by structural racism, discrimination or disinvestment;
   ● Organizations and community organizing leaders with proven success in building strong, collaborative relationships;
   ● Organizations and community organizing leaders who elevate the voices and priorities of their communities through the power of residents, foster a sense of collective purpose and embrace the value of co-creating; and
• Organizations that commit to sending two participants to each convening to be involved, as a leader and a learner, in the community of practice.

10. Who will review proposals?
The proposals will be reviewed by an internal team composed of Trust staff.

Community of Practice

11. What is the time commitment for the Community of Practice?
As a co-designed community of practice, the individuals who constitute the cohort will determine the number of times they meet over the course of year 1 and 2. Our team has been doing a landscape analysis of communities of practice models. We will share best practices with the cohort but they will ultimately design a model that makes sense for the group.

12. Do the representatives have to be full-time employees of the organization?
We leave it up to the organizations to determine who are the best individuals to participate in the learning cohort. It does not have to be a full-time employee. It can be a volunteer, a resident leader, the organizer, etc. We just ask organizations to select individuals who will have the flexibility to participate in the cohort and share/bring learnings back to the organization.

13. Do the two people need to be the same people throughout the course of the grant period?
Yes, our preference is to have the same individuals in the cohort for two years.

Use of Funds

14. How is “capacity building” defined in the context of this RFP? Can we hire staff with the capacity building dollars?
Our belief is that organizations are best positioned to determine their needs. We are defining capacity building broadly. If the capacity need of an organization is to increase staff, then the organization should submit a proposal to increase their community organizing efforts by hiring additional staff.

15. If a community has developed a quality of life plan, can funds be used to implement strategies identified on the plan?
No. This RFP is designed to support an organization’s community organizing efforts. The Trust will have other funding opportunities to support community plans and implementation.
16. Can an organization apply for more than one grant at the Trust if its work addresses various Trust strategies?
Yes, an organization may respond to this RFP and to other funding opportunities at the Trust.

17. If we do not receive the grant, will we receive feedback?
Yes, we will do our best to accommodate feedback requests.