



AFRICAN AMERICAN LEGACY  
AN INITIATIVE of



THE CHICAGO  
COMMUNITY TRUST®  
EQUITY • OPPORTUNITY • PROSPERITY

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: 2025 AFRICAN AMERICAN LEGACY**

RFP Release Date:	Monday, April 14, 2025
Information Session (Zoom):	Wednesday, April 23, 2025 at 10 AM Central <a href="#">Register here.</a>
Peer Clinics (Zoom)	April 28 at 12 PM: Program Narratives May 1 at 10 AM: Budgets and Financials May 7 at 2 PM: Site Visit Preparation <a href="#">Join the Zoom sessions here.</a>
Application Deadline:	Wednesday, May 21, 2025
Site Visits:	July 14 – July 30, 2025
Funding Decisions:	September 2025

***Background***

African American Legacy (AAL), an initiative of The Chicago Community Trust, is a philanthropic and educational initiative led by Black civic and community leaders who share the common goal of improving the quality of life among Black people throughout metropolitan Chicago. AAL engages leaders in philanthropy, collectively and individually, and provides support to nonprofit organizations that work at the community level to educate and engage communities, and to provide neighborhood-based services and solutions to address community problems. Grounded in the philosophies of collective giving, community engagement, and grant making, AAL serves as a convener and catalyst to promote significant impact in Black communities through the organizations that it supports. The ultimate goal of AAL’s grantmaking cycle is to strategically assist organizations in their growth and development so they can leverage these funds to attract new, larger investments.

***Priority strategies and activities***

AAL will support community organizations who share the common goal of improving the quality of life among Black people throughout metropolitan Chicago working in the following areas:

1. **Community Wealth Building:** We seek to support organizations focused on the shared wealth of their communities, as connected groups of people. It is the shared wealth, not the sum of wealth, of multiple households or whole communities. For this focus area, successful applicants approach economic development in a manner that promotes the local, democratic, and shared ownership and control of community assets. Such initiatives include:
  - a. Worker-Owned Cooperatives: Values-driven businesses that are collectively owned and democratically operated by their employees. Worker Cooperatives generate worker and community benefits.

- b. Limited Equity Housing Cooperatives: Housing that is collectively owned and democratically managed by residents and that aims to maintain permanent affordability, accessibility, and stability.
  - c. Community Land Trusts: Community-based nonprofits that acquire and steward community land and assets for the explicit purpose of preserving affordability and mitigating displacement from residential and commercial properties.
  - d. Community Investment Vehicles: Legal mechanisms for community investment in neighborhood assets based on shared values and development goals. In its ideal form, CIVs are designed, majority-owned, and majority-controlled by residents or local members.
2. **Community Mobilization**: We seek to support organizations doing work in the areas of voting rights/access activism, immigration reform, education inequity, and combatting the erasure of Black people, Black history, and Black stories.
3. **Community Care**: We seek to support organizations that actively respond to the disproportionate impact of issues such as employment instability, housing instability, and trauma on Black people and Black communities through the delivery of mental health and wellness services as their primary service.

### ***Grantmaking Criteria***

- **Black-Led or Black-Serving Organizations**: AAL is committed to supporting Black leaders in organizations or organizations that serve underinvested communities whose residents or constituents are predominately Black. Black-serving means constituents are predominantly (51%) Black and/or from the African Diaspora (Africans brought primarily to the Americas as slaves who live around the globe—Brazil, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Europe, and Asia). Organizations that are older than five years will not be considered if the Executive Director and Board Chair are the same individual.
- **Place-based**: Primarily located in the Chicago metropolitan region (which includes Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and/or Will Counties, Illinois), and accessed by Black people living in this region.
- **People-driven**. Program direction and design are grounded in the needs of the constituency and the community served. Using an asset-based approach means that the organization's work is done not only for the people involved but also by them.

Successful requests will demonstrate how the organization's mission, strategies, and activities contribute to and advance one of the three priority areas as defined above.

Please review your budgets and attachments for accuracy and consistency before submitting your application. Incomplete and untimely applications will not be considered for review.

### ***Grant Amounts Available and Term***

All 2025 AAL grants will be for general operating support or project-based support of organizations or programs that align with the defined priority areas.

Grants are for one year. An organization may only submit one request for funding per cycle. The AAL grant term is from October to September of the following year.

An AAL grant awarded in the 2024 grant cycle would not prohibit an organization from applying for another AAL grant in 2025. **Please note that a prior grant from AAL does not guarantee renewal or continued annual AAL support.**

Grants or grant requests made through The Chicago Community Trust are separate from those made through African American Legacy. Therefore, organizations can make grant requests to both AAL and the Trust at the same time. All grants made by AAL require that the online application be completed in its entirety.

**Community Wealth Building Applicants Only:** Grants under this priority area for 2025 will range in size between \$50,000 to \$75,000 based on the scope of the applicant's general operations or project-based needs.

**Community Mobilization and Community Care applicants only:** Grants under these priority areas for 2025 will range in size between \$15,000 to \$25,000 based on the scope of the applicant's general operations or project-based needs.

### ***Eligible Applicants***

Organizations that are Black-led or Black-serving, responsive and rooted in community, and whose work is focused in one of the three priority areas outlined above are eligible to apply.

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 Internal Revenue Code (“the Code”); or
  - (b) is fiscally sponsored by a Section 501(c)(3) organization; or
  - (c) 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; and
- Located within or primarily serving residents of the Chicago metropolitan region, which includes Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and/or Will Counties, Illinois.

**Community Wealth Building Applicants only:** There is no operating budget limit under this priority area; however, we encourage your requested amount to be consistent with your budget.

**Community Mobilization and Community Care applicants only:** Eligible organizations must have current and prior year annual operating budgets that are not less than \$50,000 and not more than \$2,000,000.

Applicants without 501(c)(3) status must identify a fiscal sponsor before applying and ask that sponsor to complete and certify an organization profile in The Chicago Community Trust's grants management system, GrantCentral, at <https://community-cct.force.com/grantcentral/s/>.

### ***Ineligible Uses***

Grant funds shall not be used for:

- Electioneering or political activities
- Contributions to any candidate for public office or political committee
- Campaigning on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office
- Grants to individuals

**Contact Information**

For technical questions regarding GrantCentral, please email [grants@cct.org](mailto:grants@cct.org).

For programmatic and application content questions, please email Carrie Goodale, Affinity Funds Specialist at [cgoodale@cct.org](mailto:cgoodale@cct.org).

**Collection of Demographic Data**

The Chicago Community Trust serves a wide variety of constituents and organizations and believes in the value of diversity. As such, we collect organizational demographic data and semi-regularly review the data to inform our outreach and representation of our funding to ensure we are contributing to our mission of a thriving, equitable, and connected Chicago region. We also ask that you share with us the demographics of your organization's board, leadership, and staff. The data collected are not criteria used for funding. The demographic composition of The Trust staff and board is available on our website [here](#).

**Application Process**

Applicants complete their application via GrantCentral, The Chicago Community Trust's online grants management system, at <https://community-cct.force.com/grantcentral/s/login/>.

Applicants must complete and certify an Organization Profile before applying. If the Profile was completed for a previous funding opportunity, it must be reviewed, updated and certified before submitting a new application. If applicable, fiscal sponsors must also complete and certify an organization profile in GrantCentral before the grant seeker submits an application.

Late or incomplete applications will not be considered for review. Applicants may receive a site visit (in person or virtual), telephone call, or other communication from foundation staff and AAL leadership as part of the application review process.