



THE CHICAGO COMMUNITY TRUST®

EQUITY • OPPORTUNITY • PROSPERITY

Sustainable Solutions for Housing Stability Request for Proposals

RFP Release Date:	March 2, 2026
Information Session:	March 10, 2026, 2:30 p.m.
LOI Deadline:	March 24, 2026
Full Application Invitation:	April 29, 2026
Full Application Deadline:	May 20, 2026
Site Visits:	June 15-July 13, 2026
Funding Decision:	August 20, 2026

Background

At The Chicago Community Trust, we believe that people are our region’s greatest asset. Central to our Critical Needs strategy is the recognition that access to stable, healthy, and secure housing is fundamental in paving the way toward economic stability for individuals and families. Understanding the Chicago region’s formidable homelessness challenges, the Trust is offering this funding opportunity aimed at bolstering direct service organizations that provide housing and homeless prevention services. Through a human-centered approach, we are dedicated to ensuring that communities experiencing homelessness or unstable housing receive the support and resources necessary to achieve and maintain stable housing.

Need/Opportunity Statement

According to the annual Point-in-Time (PIT) count for Chicago, there were 7,452 sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness in 2025, a 60 percent decrease from 2024¹. This success is worthy of celebrating but conceals the reality that the number of people who were experiencing homelessness in Chicago in 2025 was still at an all-time high compared to any year prior to 2024. In other words, even with the significant decrease in people experiencing homelessness from 2024 to 2025, the need for homeless services and housing has not diminished. For example, “[o]n an average day in 2024, for every 6 people housed through our CoC resources, 40 people were new to experiencing

¹ https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/fss/supp_info/Homeless/2025-Homeless-PointInTimeReport/2025%20Homeless%20Point-in-Time%20Count%20Report.pdf

homelessness in the last 2 years.”² Furthermore, in Suburban Cook County there was a 15 percent increase in people experiencing homelessness in 2025³. These data points underscore that despite shifts in Chicago and Cook County’s PIT counts, the need for comprehensive homelessness services remains steady and significant.

The Chicago Coalition to End Homelessness, a nonprofit focused on systemic change through organizing, advocacy, legal assistance, and education, does its own estimate of people experiencing homelessness using a more wholistic measurement that includes people who are living doubled-up or are in overcrowded and impermanent living situations. Based on its estimates, 58,625 people were experiencing homelessness in 2024⁴, three times the number of individuals identified compared to a total of 18,836 from the 2024 Point-in-Time count. This speaks to the reality that many more people do not have a fixed, regular, or adequate place to sleep at night than is captured in the city’s annual Point-in-Time counts. The data from both reports highlight that homelessness is both widespread and unequal in its impact across racial and ethnic groups as Black and Latine neighbors are overrepresented in the counts of people experiencing homelessness as compared to their proportion in the wider population. Black residents make up ~30 percent of the Chicago population, yet account for over 50 percent of people experiencing homelessness, while Latine residents comprise ~30 percent of the city’s population but make up over 90 percent⁵ of those who are doubled-up.

Conclusively, the lack of affordable housing continues to exacerbate and contribute to the rise in homelessness. A report by Housing Action Illinois and the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), *The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes*, from March 2025 showed that Chicago has a shortage of 126,165 affordable rental homes for those with the lowest incomes and only 32 affordable and available rental homes for every 100 extremely low-income renter households⁶.

While the state of Illinois has a two-year plan to prevent and end homelessness and the City of Chicago released its five-year blueprint for homelessness in January 2026, support from philanthropy continues to be a vital component to the homeless service sector’s work to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring. The Chicago Community Trust is committed to continuing to provide flexible, multi-year funding to sustain the work to prevent and end homelessness.

² <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/fss/provdrs/emerg/news/2024/july/2025-pit-count-fact-sheet.html>

³ <https://suburbancook.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/2025-Alliance-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

⁴ <https://chicagohomeless.org/homelessestimate/?sourceid=1116661&emci=397ef5e0-3afd-f011-832f-000d3a1f0e4c&emdi=fdcff26d-59fd-f011-832f-000d3a1f0e4c&ceid=24798879>

⁵ <https://latinopolicyforum.org/housing/doubled-up-homelessness/>

⁶ <https://nlihc.org/gap>

Priority Strategies and Activities

The Sustainable Solutions for Housing Stability RFP aims to allocate resources to assist individuals and families facing homelessness or unstable housing situations. A continuum of support is needed from eviction prevention and rental subsidies to retain housing to emergency and transitional housing with navigation support to permanent housing. In addition to housing, wraparound supports for individuals and families that provide access to mental, behavioral and medical healthcare, as well as education and employment pathways and connections to benefits provide the grounding for housing to be sustained.

Proposed programs and initiatives will fall into two primary categories:

Prevention:

- **Emergency rental assistance and subsidies** to help people stay in their homes
- **Legal support** for individuals and families facing eviction

Housing:

- **Safe emergency shelter** that provides healthy meals, healthcare access, and case management to help people move into stable housing
- **Transitional housing with wraparound support**, giving residents time to pursue education, job training, and employment
- **Permanent supportive housing** for individuals with chronic illnesses or disabilities
- **Housing navigation services** to reduce barriers and offer culturally and linguistically responsive support
- **Specialized housing programs** tailored to the unique needs of vulnerable communities, including returning residents, youth, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and survivors of gender-based violence

Prospective applicants are encouraged to submit proposals outlining impactful programs and innovative strategies aligned with the above categories. The ultimate goal is to foster sustainable solutions that promote housing stability and address the root causes of homelessness within the Chicago region.

Goals and Outcomes

The Sustainable Solutions for Housing Stability RFP advances the Trust's 10-year goal to increase the number of households meeting their basic human needs. The Measures of Progress and Indicators are focused on documenting the progress of housing programs

that help people move from homelessness to housing stability as well as retention of housing stability. Additionally, the Trust seeks to capture the work of prevention programs helping people retain housing. Applicants must report on the measure of progress and aligned indicators for either Housing or Prevention (*marked “required”*). If an organization does both, the organization should report on both. If able, applicants may also report on the measures of progress related to retention.

Housing Outcome: Improve health and wellbeing outcomes

Measure of Progress: Increase number of clients served (Required)

Indicators: Housing programs/services: Clients served + exits

1. Required: Total number of households enrolled and participating in housing programs (emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid rehousing, PSH, etc.)
2. Required: Number of households exiting into permanent, stable housing (out of number enrolled)

Measure of Progress: Increase in clients retained in stable housing

Indicators: Housing programs/services: Retention

1. Number of households retaining housing for 12+ months

Prevention Outcome: Improve health and wellbeing outcomes

Measure of Progress: Increase number of clients served (Required)

Indicators: Prevention programs/services: Clients served + remained stably housed

1. Required: Total number of at-risk households enrolled and participating in prevention programs (legal services to prevent eviction, financial assistance, diversion programs, etc.)
2. Required: Number of at-risk households remaining in permanent, stable housing (out of number enrolled)

Measure of Progress: Increase number of clients retained in stable housing

Indicators: Prevention programs/services: Retention

1. Number of households that remained stably housed 90+ days

Grantmaking Criteria

This three-year funding opportunity will be for general-operating support. Organizations invited to submit a full application will be evaluated based on their capacity to provide services rooted in best practices that meet the priority strategies outlined in this funding program.

Criteria for general operating grants will include:

- Organizations that can demonstrate core work in addressing homelessness and housing insecurity
- Organizations that can demonstrate avenues for people with lived experience to provide feedback that guides programs and service delivery
- Documented history of achieving outcomes aligned with providing housing stability and/or prevention of homelessness
- Defined and established process for collecting and using data for learning and improvement

The Letter of Inquiry (LOI) for this funding program will be evaluated based on the level of alignment with the priority activities listed above and the Trust's strategic goals. To capture the information needed to evaluate submitted LOIs, **please address all components of the supplemental questions listed below. The supplemental questions can be found at the end of the Application Summary section.**

1. If your organization provides shelter or housing services, list the program model(s) you operate. (e.g., emergency shelter, medical respite, interim/transitional housing, rapid rehousing, permanent supportive housing)
2. If your organization provides homelessness prevention services, list the program model(s) your organization operates. (e.g., rental subsidies, legal support/assistance)

Grant Amounts Available & Term

These multi-year, general operating grants will span three years. Yearly grant amounts will be between **\$75,000** and **\$125,000**. The Trust estimates it will make between 20 and 25 grant awards. The final award amount will be determined by Trust staff and will vary based on organizational size and need. These grants will support **general operations, including public events**; however, grant recipients will be required to report on progress towards outcomes and related measures of progress each year of the grant. Grant recipients are expected to meet the Trust's requirements for the submission of interim annual reports and a final report at the end of the three-year term. The Trust values the reports as an important opportunity for mutual learning, engagement and advocacy.

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; or (c) is a governmental unit within the meaning of Section 170(c)(1) of the Code;
- Located within or primarily serving residents of Chicago or Cook County.

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://trust360.my.site.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
- Programs or activities that violate any applicable federal, state, or local laws, including, but not limited to any programs or activities that violate antidiscrimination laws
- Promoting or supporting terrorist activities or to promote terrorism
- Inherently religious activities

Contact Information

For technical questions regarding GrantCentral, email grants@cct.org.

For programmatic and application content questions, email Joanne Otte, director of Critical Needs, at jotte@cct.org or Sophia Bolton, impact coordinator, at sbolton@cct.org.

Evaluation and Learning

The Trust is committed to achieving our long-term goals and outcomes in collaboration with stakeholders and partners. We are developing outcome measures that inform progress toward our collective mission to strengthen the Chicago region. Specifically, the outcomes track progress towards the Trust's strategic goal of increasing household wealth through building income and individual and community assets in underinvested communities. The specific outcomes you select should be based on why you think the

project or strategy will lead to the anticipated result or long-term change outlined in the request for proposal (i.e., your theory of change). After you identify the aligned outcomes, you will select specific, time-limited measures of progress. These provide measurable and reportable evidence that a proposed project or organization has effectively achieved – or is on the path to achieving - its objectives. They can be measured during the grant period, contribute to your longer-term outcomes, and align with the Trust’s strategic priorities. For shorter-term grants (one year), these outcomes may not be achieved during the project's duration. For each measure of progress, you will identify your baseline, target, data collection approach, and the type of data (qualitative and quantitative). If awarded a grant, you will update the information with actuals to describe progress toward your target. In addition to what you share through site visits, convenings and reporting, we will use this information to inform our collective understanding of progress and challenges to inform next steps.

Applicants must report on the measure of progress and aligned indicators for either Housing or Prevention (*marked “required”*). If an organization does both, the organization should report on both. If able, applicants may also report on the measures of progress related to retention.

Sharing successes or challenges in achieving measures of progress is critical to our collective learning, decision-making and impact. We recognize there could be challenges to implementing any grant, many of which are not under your control and may prevent you from achieving your targets. However, learning from these challenges and successes is integral to the Trust’s learning and impact aims.

Potential grant recipients who are new to developing metrics or work plans or want to learn more about developing measures of progress can contact learning@cct.org.

Collection of Demographic Data

<https://www.cct.org/about/forchicago/>

The Chicago Community Trust serves a wide variety of constituents and organizations. We do not consider demographic data when we make funding decisions and do not discriminate based on race, gender, age, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristics. The demographic composition of the Trust’s staff and board is available on our website <https://www.cct.org/about/dei/>.

Application Process

Applicants complete their application via GrantCentral, The Chicago Community Trust’s online grants management system, at <https://trust360.my.site.com/grantcentral/s/>.

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.

The Trust will not consider late or incomplete letters of intent (LOIs) or full applications. Applicants may receive a site visit (in person or virtual), telephone call, or other communication from foundation staff as part of the application review process.

Submission Deadlines & Other Key Dates

LOIs are due at 11:59 p.m. on March 24, 2026. Full applications, if invited, are due at 11:59 p.m. on May 20, 2026. We invite all interested applicants to attend a virtual information session to learn more about this funding opportunity, ask questions, and gain clarity about the application process. Date: March 10, 2026 Time: 2:30-3:30 p.m.