



Updated October 17, 2025

Chicago Community Grants Webinar Q&A Summary

Eligibility and Application Scope

Q: Are universities eligible to apply, and can different departments within the same university submit multiple applications?

A: The program is open to nonprofit organizations serving youth in Chicago. Universities may apply if they meet this criterion. Please only submit one application per university/organization.

Q: Are religious organizations, including churches with community development corporations, eligible to apply under certain circumstances?

A: The program is open to nonprofit organizations serving youth in Chicago. Religious organizations may apply if they meet this criterion.

Q: Can organizations located outside Chicago city limits (but within Illinois) apply if their programming is based in Chicago? Does eligibility extend to Chicagoland or require a Chicago-proper presence, including satellite locations?

A: Organizations must demonstrate a strong presence and impact within the city of Chicago to be considered. Programming must be specifically in Chicago.

Q: Can umbrella organizations submit applications on behalf of multiple community groups, and will multiple applications from the same organization be accepted?

A: Umbrella organizations may submit an application **only if** they are serving as the lead applicant for a specific collaborative initiative or partnership. In such cases, the application must clearly identify all partner organizations and outline how responsibilities, deliverables, and funding will be shared. However, each organization—whether applying individually or as part of collaborative effort—may only be included in **one** grant application. For example, if two organizations apply jointly under one application, neither organization may submit a separate application.

Q: Is alignment with one focus area sufficient, or must applicants align with both? Are salaries for staff implementing focus area programming eligible for funding?

A: Organizations must align with **one** of the two focus areas: 1) Fostering Communities (Pathways to Empowerment) or 2) Feeding Futures (Food Access and Insecurity) and are only eligible to submit **one** application

Q. Are salaries for staff implementing focus area programming eligible for funding?



A: Funding is for program-specific support, not general operating support. Staff salaries directly tied to program delivery are eligible. Please see budget example in application for more details.

Q: Are there guidelines or restrictions on per participant costs, indirect costs, and capital expenses?

A: Indirect costs are capped at 15% of the proposed budget for the project. There is not a set cost per participant allowed by the grant. Capital expenses are not eligible for funding support through this grant.

Q: Is there a minimum or maximum grant amount (e.g., under \$50,000)? Will funding be sustained beyond this year, and will awards be evenly distributed across focus areas?

A: Grant awards range from ~ \$50,000 to \$150,000. All grants are for a one-year term (2025–2026). Distribution across focus areas will be balanced. All applications are evaluated competitively.

Q: Are school-run food pantries eligible if the school network is a nonprofit?

A: Nonprofit organizations serving youth in Chicago are eligible. School-run food pantries may apply if they meet the grant criteria listed in the grant application.

Q: Are organizations automatically ineligible if they meet any of the exclusion criteria listed in the RFP?

A: Our priority is to support organizations that meet the specified criteria and programs that align directly with the focus areas of Fostering Communities: Pathways to Empowerment and Feeding Futures: Food Access & Insecurity. All applicants will be evaluated accordingly.

Q: Will previous grantees be prioritized, or is this a clean slate for all applicants?

A: All organizations, including current grantees, must reapply and will be evaluated based on updated criteria. If a current grantee does not meet the criteria, McDonald's will work directly with the specific organization(s) to identify next steps.

Q: Is there a minimum staff size required to be eligible?

A: No.

Q: Are fiscally sponsored organizations eligible to apply?

A: Organizations with fiscal sponsorship are eligible to apply. The fiscal sponsor must be a U.S.-based 501(c)(3) public charity in good standing with the IRS.

Applications must include:

- The fiscal sponsor's legal name, EIN, and contact information
- A copy of the fiscal sponsorship agreement outlining roles and responsibilities



- Confirmation that the fiscal sponsor will manage grant funds and reporting in accordance with IRS and program requirements

Funding and Budget

Q: Can grant funds be used for participant stipends and partial staff costs beyond indirect costs?

A: Yes, grant funds can be used to support participant stipends that facilitate involvement in the program and to cover staff costs for direct programmatic services.

Q: Are there any restrictions on budget allocations such as salary caps, occupancy, or indirect costs?

A: Up to 15% of the total grant may be allocated for indirect or administrative costs. Staff costs such as salaries should be proportionate and directly related to the program.

Q: Is there a minimum or maximum organizational budget size required to apply?

A: There is no minimum or maximum organizational budget size to apply. However, applicants should have an operating budget sufficient to responsibly absorb and manage a grant award of at least \$50,000.

Q: Will grant requests under \$50,000 be considered?

A: No. Grants will range from ~\$50,000 to \$150,000

Q: Is there any commitment to sustained funding beyond the current year?

A: All grants are for a one-year term.

Program Focus and Impact

Q: Is it necessary to serve the entire 16–24 age group, or is serving a subset (e.g., 18–24) acceptable?

A: Serving a subset such as 18–24 is acceptable because it falls within the broader required age range of 16–24. As long as the individuals served are within that range, the requirement is met.

Q: Can programs that serve mixed cohorts of youth and adults still be competitive?

A: Serving a mixed cohort of youth and adults is acceptable if the substantial portion of individuals served fall within the age range of 16–24. As long as individuals served are within that range, the requirement is met.

Q: Is there a preference between programs with broad reach versus deep impact?



A: Applications are evaluated on proven impact, alignment with focus areas, and demonstrated need. Both broad reach and deep impact are considered.

Q: Are organizations with proven impact in food insecurity eligible if launching a new youth-focused initiative?

A: Yes, organizations launching new youth-focused initiatives in food insecurity are eligible if they demonstrate alignment and impact.

Q: Can college access and success programs be considered part of workforce readiness?

A: Programs that expand access to education and employment for youth are eligible under the Fostering Communities Pathways to Empowerment focus area.

Q: Are mentorship and coaching programs eligible, and what types are considered ineligible?

A: Yes, mentorship and coaching programs are eligible. Please visit our landing page for more information.

Q: Are organizations serving multiple populations, including but not limited to opportunity youth, eligible to apply?

A: Yes.

Q: Can organizations with a track record in adult workforce development apply if they are shifting focus to youth?

A: Yes, as long as the organization is eligible, the initiative aligns with the funding pillars and demonstrates measurable impact.

Q: Is a pilot initiative eligible if it is part of a larger, established program?

A: Yes, as long as the organization is eligible, the initiative aligns with the funding pillars and demonstrates measurable impact.

Grant Structure and Reporting

Q: Will there be equal number of awards for each funding priority?

A: While we aim to maintain a balanced portfolio across funding priorities, the final distribution of awards will be determined by the applicant pool. The number of awards in each category may vary depending on the volume and strength of applications received.

Q: How many grants are expected to be awarded?



A: A limited number of grants will be awarded. While there is no predetermined split between the two focus areas, all applications will be reviewed and evaluated based on organizational size, scope, and demonstrated impact.

Q: How many applications are anticipated?

A: This is an open RFP. We are expecting a competitive process.

Q: Is there a per participant cost target for employment programs?

A: No. There is no specific per-participant cost target; however, program budgets should be reasonable and aligned with the proposed program's deliverables and activities, goals and objectives.

Q: Will the full application be submitted through the CCT Grants Central portal?

A: No. Please visit our landing page for more information and the link to apply.

Q: Can applicants connect with a program officer before submitting?

A: No preliminary or informational calls will be taken. Please refer to the FAQs and webinar for guidance.

Q: How should collaborative organizations approach the application if they address both focus areas?

A: Organizations must align with at least one of the two focus areas: Fostering Communities (Pathways to Empowerment) or Feeding Futures (Food Access and Insecurity) and only chose one focus area to apply for.

Q: How should organizations report food access impact when youth are not the direct recipients?

A: Organizations should report on food access impact and outcomes in a way that best demonstrates the reach of their interventions. Providing an estimate of the number of youth served within the total population served is acceptable. Given that food access programs often serve a broad range of individuals, organizations may also report outcomes by household or equivalent metric as captured within their program data.

Q: How should volunteer contributions be reported—should youth and adult volunteers be counted separately?

A: Volunteer contributions can be reported in total; it is not necessary to separate youth and adult volunteers. Applicants may include volunteers of all ages supporting program activities. While volunteerism is strongly encouraged, it is not a requirement in order to apply for the grant.



Q: Is a verified account with The Community Trust required to apply?

A: A verified account with The Community Trust is not required to apply.

Q: Can applicants update their submission if a budget was omitted?

A: Please email the [McDonald's Community Impact & Philanthropy team](#) if you omitted a budget from your application.

Additional Questions

Q: Where can we find the RFP for the grant?

A: Please visit our [landing page](#) for more information and the application link.

Q: Is there a limit to the number of youth served or sites covered?

A: No, there is not a limit to the number of youth served or sites covered as long as the services are provided in the city of Chicago.

Q: Can health systems with multiple programs submit multiple applications?

A: The program is open to nonprofit organizations serving youth in Chicago. Health systems may apply if they meet this criterion. Please only submit one application.

Q: Can a gun violence prevention organization focused on youth be eligible?

A: Yes, if the gun violence prevention organization's proposed program is directly aligned to one of the two focus areas of Fostering Communities: Pathways to Empowerment or Feeding Futures: Food Access and Insecurity.

Q: Can an organization focused on scholarships, workshops, and mentorship apply?

A: Yes, if the organization's proposed program is directly aligned to one of the two focus areas of Fostering Communities: Pathways to Empowerment and Feeding Futures: Food Access and Insecurity.

Q: Can organizations without volunteers but with community workforce hiring still be eligible?

A: Volunteers are not required for Food Access and Insecurity grants. We included the metric as a placeholder for discussion with successful grant recipients to provide an avenue for tracking workforce supports.