



## advisory board role - question & answer (Q&A)<sup>1</sup>

@ CCT Disabilities Fund

**What is the CCT Disabilities Fund:** The Chicago Community Trust Disabilities Fund is an affinity fund focused on advancing the principles and goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act, especially for more marginalized sectors of the disability community in the metropolitan Chicago area<sup>2</sup>. The Disabilities Fund (the Fund) has an annual grantmaking budget of between \$200,000-400,000 and provides charitable support to groups and organizations advancing disability inclusion, rights and justice. Moving forward, and to align with the Trust's goal of closing the racial and ethnic wealth gap, the Fund will be prioritizing identifying and funding those groups and organizations which have historically had less access to resources. It is governed by an Advisory Board and operates under the oversight of the Board of Directors of the Trust. The Advisory Board structure includes co-chairs as well as working groups, as needed or desired\*.

**Who are Disabilities Fund advisors:** Consistent with the slogan, “nothing about us without us” - and in furtherance of the principles and goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act of equality of opportunity, full participation in decision making, independent living and economic stability as well as the [10 principles of disability justice](#) - the Fund's strategic and operational direction and grants decision-making is led by activists representing different segments of the disability community in the metropolitan Chicago area.

All members (nine) of the Advisory Board represent the diversity of the disabled population of metropolitan Chicago in regard to all aspects of identity, including race/ethnicity, Indigeneity, class/occupation, religion, gender, LGBTQIA+, and more. Members can come from any walk of life, profession, or socio-economic status. They can also be emerging or potential leaders.

**What do advisors do:** Based on their knowledge of the needs of persons with disabilities in Chicago and on their experience in the areas of disability inclusion, rights and justice as well as local civil society activism, advisors set Fund strategic and operational direction and manage grants decision-making. Because the Fund is in a transformational process, initial advisors may address a range of issues, including the following areas:

- Building Disabilities Fund strategy for participatory grantmaking and other supports for the community, like convening or capacity bridging

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<sup>1</sup> This Q&A document is specific to the transformation phase of the Disabilities Fund and will be adjusted over the lifetime of the Fund.

<sup>2</sup> This includes Chicago, suburban Cook County, and the Illinois counties of DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will.



- Determining the annual operating and grantmaking budget (within the annual Disabilities Fund budget), depending on strategy
- Deciding on the broad goals of grantmaking, priority areas or objectives of organizations to support, dollar range for grants, timeframe for funding, whether funding is for general/unrestricted or for project/restricted purposes, etcetera
- In conjunction with the Foundation, recommending key eligibility criteria for grant applicants (e.g. organizations that are disability-led and focused; address disability justice; are movement builders...) as well as criteria for selection of grantees and the annual cohort of grantees
- Deciding how to make the Fund's process accessible to all persons with disabilities
- Developing an application review process and deciding who will review applications and how decision-making will be handled (are consensus decisions desired? Anonymous decisions? How to handle conflicts of interest?)
- Making grants recommendations for approval by the Trust
- Determining any metrics for monitoring, evaluation, learning of grants and practical application of this
- Figuring out what the relationship between grantees and the Fund will look like, including communications, convening, support, reporting
- Contributing to planning for convenings of grantees or events showcasing the work of the Fund and its grantees
- Participating in meetings with donors or potential donors to the Fund
- Building Advisory Board structure, working protocols and policies
- Raising awareness of the Fund within CCT and in the broader community and sharing learnings to advance the ADA goals of equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency of persons with disabilities

**How is the Advisory Board led:** The Advisory Board has two co-chairs among the 9 members.

**What is the term of an advisor:** Advisors serve a four-year term, once renewable. Beginning advisory board members will have staggered terms, such that 3 members have 2-year terms, 3 members have 3-year terms, and 3 members have 4-year terms.

**Important Note:** Once selected, members of the Advisory Board participate in the Board in their independent capacity. They do **not** have a reporting function back to their organization(s) or their network(s).

**When and where does the Advisory Board meet:** Initial Advisory Board meetings will occur monthly as the Fund develops its new structure. Following an initial period, meetings will occur face-to-face or by video at least quarterly. Face-to-face meetings occur in Chicago. Advisors may also be called for special meetings and/or asked to communicate on matters of importance to the Fund between meetings, via electronic media.



**Are advisors compensated for the expense of participation:** To enable advisors to attend Advisory Board meetings, the Fund covers costs of transportation and reasonable accommodations, such as accompaniment by personal attendants or Sign Language interpreters. All meetings are held in accessible venues and honor advisor access needs. An honorarium is offered to recognize the time advisors take out of their regular schedules for participation in the Fund. *The honorarium is \$5000 annually.*

**Does participation as an advisor preclude an advisor's organization from applying for funding:** Participation in the Advisory Board does **not** preclude advisor's organizations from applying for funding. Advisors **are** required to inform the Fund about any potential conflicts of interest. Advisors may also need to recuse themselves from decision-making when a grant proposal is being considered from organizations with which they are more affiliated.

**What are the necessary qualifications of an advisor:** Important qualifications include *all* of the following:

1. Are a person with disability or have personal experience with disability
2. Live in the metropolitan Chicago area
3. Have lived experience of marginalization due to disability and other identities, such as race/ethnicity, Indigeneity, class/occupation, gender, LGBTQIA+, religion, and more.
4. Have substantial understanding or a willingness to learn about disability inclusion, rights and justice frameworks and movements
5. Are up to date with or are willing to learn about Chicago area advocacy for and obstacles to disability inclusion, rights and justice
6. Understand the principles of the ADA (see above) and reasonable accommodations processes
7. Have cross-disability experience or sensitivity

**What is gained from participation as an advisor:** Advisors have the opportunity to participate with others in growing investment in disability-led work for rights, inclusion and justice in the Chicago metropolitan area. Being an advisor to the Disabilities Fund will afford participating individuals with new networks and connections and increase their understanding and learning about this key area of civil rights and justice.