



DISABILITIES FUND 2025: REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Background

The Disabilities Fund at The Chicago Community Trust is an affinity fund focused on advancing the principles and goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), especially for more marginalized sectors of the disability community in the metropolitan Chicago area. The Fund provides charitable support to groups and organizations advancing disability inclusion, rights, and justice. The Fund prioritizes identifying and funding groups and organizations which have historically had less access to resources. Organizations who are not in the groups described in this RFP are encouraged to apply and provide information on how their backgrounds and experiences would otherwise further the principles and goals of the Americans with Disabilities Act especially for marginalized sectors of the disability community.

Consistent with the slogan, “nothing about us without us” - and in furtherance of the principles and goals of the ADA, 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 diverse segments of the disability community in the metropolitan Chicago area. The new advisory board is the result of a year-long transformation and renewal process aimed at centering the perspectives of those with lived experience with disability in the redistribution of resources. For more information about the Fund’s Advisory Board, see [this article](#) on the website.

This 2025 grant cycle will be a pilot grant cycle as the Fund continues to refine and iterate its grantmaking strategy and priorities.

Need/opportunity statement

In the 2025 pilot grant cycle, the Disabilities Fund will be providing **general operating grants, which can be used as seed funding for new initiatives, or capacity building for smaller organizations, that enhance the lives of disabled people and/or the broader disability community.**

Our funding is grounded in a broad understanding of disability, encompassing physical, sensory, cognitive, and psychosocial disabilities, as well as systemic barriers to access and participation. We fully support and welcome the multiple ways people and communities identify themselves and recognize that this language may not reflect the full breadth of diversity of lived experiences and identities that comprise the disability community.

See also the glossary section.

Priority strategies and activities

For this grant cycle, the Disabilities Fund seeks to fund **grassroots organizations and programs (within larger organizations) that enhance the lives of disabled people and/or the broader disability community at the intersection of Black, Indigenous and people of color (“BIPOC”) and other marginalized communities.**

Priority consideration will be given to:

- Organizations or programs within larger organizations that demonstrate commitment to intersectional work centering disabled people and/or the disability community; or
- Organizations or programs within larger organizations with disability-focused missions or goals; or,
- Organizations with meaningful representation of disabled people in their leadership and/or staff.

Goals and outcomes

N/A

Grantmaking criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on responses to the application questions demonstrating the organization’s commitment to intersectional work in disability communities; the organization's understanding of, commitment to, and/or implementation of disability justice; and any collaborations or partnerships towards disability justice.

While our advisory board’s funding framework is inspired by the 10 principles of disability justice, we welcome applications from organizations that support disability justice in diverse ways.

Additional documents

For organizations submitting an application for a disability-focused program within their organization, please also submit a program budget.

Grant amounts available & term

Grants will range from \$5,000 to \$25,000. The grant term will be for 12 months.

Eligible applicants

To be eligible for a grant award, an applicant must:

- Have a current year operating budget under \$1,000,000; OR have a disability-focused program with a budget of under \$1,000,000.
- 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”);
- (b) is fiscally sponsored by a Section 501(c)(3) organization;
- Or (c) or is a governmental unit within the meaning of Section 170(c)(1) of the Code;
- Be 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
- Be located within or primarily serving residents of the Chicago metropolitan region, which includes Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and/or Will Counties, Illinois.

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](#).

Ineligible uses

Grant funds may 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 or call 312-565-2574.

For programmatic and application content questions, as well as questions around accessibility options for application submission, please email or call Carrie Goodale, Affinity Funds Specialist, at disabilitiesfund@cct.org or at 312-565-2574.

Collection of DEI demographic data

The Chicago Community Trust serves a wide variety of constituents and organizations. As such, we collect organizational demographic data to inform us about our potential and current grant recipients' diverse, representative and inclusive staffing practices. This data helps us ensure that the organizations we fund are representative of the communities we serve. Therefore, your Organization Profile should provide demographic data on your organization's board, leadership, staff, and volunteers to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives of impacted communities.

We strongly encourage all applications to provide this demographic data through their Organization Profile.

Application process

The Disabilities Fund is committed to accessibility in its grant process.

As possible, applicants should complete their application via [GrantCentral](#), The Chicago Community Trust's online grants management system.

Completing and certifying an Organization Profile is the first step in this system. If the Profile was completed for a previous funding opportunity, it must be reviewed, updated and certified before submitting a new application. Any fiscal sponsor must also complete and certify an organization profile in GrantCentral before the grant seeker submits an application.

Screen-reader compatible Microsoft Word versions of the Organization Profile and the application are available for download on the Disabilities Fund webpage, or may be requested via email at disabilitiesfund@cct.org, to be completed and emailed for consideration by the deadline. Applicants may also submit video or audio files answering the application questions, and provide the information requested in the Organization Profile through a call with Trust staff in lieu of submitting responses. Please reach out to Carrie Goodale at disabilitiesfund@cct.org or at 312-565-2574 to request any accommodations.

Applicants may receive a virtual site visit, telephone call, or other communication from Trust staff as part of the application review process.

Submission deadlines and other key dates

Event	Date
RFP release date:	Wednesday, February 5
Virtual Info Session:	Tuesday, February 11, 10 - 11:30 AM Central Time Register for the session via Zoom.
Application deadline:	Wednesday, March 12
Virtual Site Visit Start Date:	May 1
Virtual Site Visit End Date:	May 30
Announcement Date (grant agreements sent):	Early to mid-July

Glossary

[The 10 Principles of Disability Justice](#) were developed in 2015 by [Sins Invalid](#), a disability justice based performance project that incubates and celebrates artists with disabilities, centralizing artists of color and LGBTQ / gender-variant artists as communities who have been historically marginalized.

1. **INTERSECTIONALITY** “We do not live single issue lives” – Audre Lorde. Ableism, coupled with white supremacy, supported by capitalism, underscored by heteropatriarchy, has rendered the vast majority of the world “invalid.”
2. **LEADERSHIP OF THOSE MOST IMPACTED** “We are led by those who most know these systems.” – Aurora Levins Morales
3. **ANTI-CAPITALIST POLITIC** In an economy that sees land and humans as components of profit, we are anti-capitalist by the nature of having non-conforming body/minds.
4. **COMMITMENT TO CROSS-MOVEMENT ORGANIZING** Shifting how social justice movements understand disability and contextualize ableism, disability justice lends itself to politics of alliance.
5. **RECOGNIZING WHOLENESS** People have inherent worth outside of commodity relations and capitalist notions of productivity. Each person is full of history and life experience.
6. **SUSTAINABILITY** We pace ourselves, individually and collectively, to be sustained long term. Our embodied experiences guide us toward ongoing justice and liberation.
7. **COMMITMENT TO CROSS-DISABILITY SOLIDARITY** We honor the insights and participation of all of our community members, knowing that isolation undermines collective liberation.
8. **INTERDEPENDENCE** We meet each others’ needs as we build toward liberation, knowing that state solutions inevitably extend into further control over lives.
9. **COLLECTIVE ACCESS** As brown, black and queer-bodied disabled people we bring flexibility and creative nuance that go beyond able-bodied/minded normativity, to be in community with each other.
10. **COLLECTIVE LIBERATION** No body or mind can be left behind – only moving together can we accomplish the revolution we require.

501(c)3 organizations are nonprofit organizations that have federal tax-exempt status as recognized by the Internal Revenue Service.

Grassroots organizations are defined as organizations with current annual operating budgets under \$1 million with a local, community-driven focus to their work.

Programs within larger organizations are defined as distinct areas of work that have their own structure, goals, and budgets.

Disability refers to the definition under the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA"): 'a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.' Additionally, we recognize and include individuals with invisible disabilities, chronic illnesses, neurodivergence, personal lived experience with disability that cause or have caused systemic barriers that impact their participation in society.

We intentionally use the term “**disabled people**” while recognizing the diverse ways that people identify, and understand that not all those who experience ableism identify as disabled.

Disability-focused refers to organizations whose missions name disabled people and/or the disability community, and/or programs (within larger organizations) that enhance the lives of disabled people and/or the disability community.

As defined by Black legal scholar and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw, **intersectionality** refers to the compounded effects of multiple systems of power/oppression experienced by individuals holding multiple marginalized identities.

Marginalized communities are defined as those communities that because of their social identities (gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status, class, etcetera) have experienced structural discrimination and have had less access to resources.

Psychosocial disabilities refer to diagnoses or experiences with mental health problems or the mental health system.

Section 170(b)(1)(A) of the Code describes organizations eligible to receive tax-deductible charitable contributions from individuals.