

Transfer Innovation Impact Model (TIIM) Request for Proposal (RFP)

RFP Release Date:	February 6, 2025
Information Sessions:	February 2025
LOI Deadline:	March 6, 2025
Full Application Deadline:	April 24, 2025
Site Visits:	May 1 – May 22, 2025
Funding Decisions:	June 26, 2025
Announcements:	September 16, 2025

Background

The Transfer Innovation Impact Model (TIIM) initiative creates a learning community where grant recipients participate in opportunities to share data and best practices to learn from each other in pursuit of improving student outcomes. TIIM is led and supported in part by Bridges to Brighter Futures. Funded through the Searle funds at the Chicago Community Trust, Bridges to Brighter Futures is a collaboration between the Kinship Foundation and the Chicago Community Trust.

The TIIM initiative's core purpose is to create inspired solutions to improve the college student transfer process. TIIM intends to surface and support models that improve transfer outcomes for college students who have traditionally had lower rates of completion including Black, Latine, and low-income students from Chicago. These students make up 42 percent of Illinois Community College students, but only 29 percent of the transfer student population and in Illinois, Black and Latine community college students transfer to four-year institutions and earn a bachelor's degree in six years, which is a much lower rate than White community college students.¹ The goal is to support successful completion of their bachelor's degree within two to three years of transfer from a community college.

The TIIM RFP invites organizations to apply for a one-year planning grant to develop and advance a transfer model that dramatically improves the bachelor's degree completion of Chicago community college students. This model will be driven by innovation, research, reporting, and supporting partnerships to create intentional learning communities.

Successful partnership models will:

- Uncover and address the needs of specific populations of Chicago students, including the most underserved populations and underinvested neighborhoods.
- Collect and share data to understand barriers on individual campuses and demonstrate the effects of interventions over time.
- Create bold, innovative practices that have the potential to improve outcomes for students.

¹ Abrahamson, M., Power, C. (2024) "Addressing Transfer Barriers: A Student-Centered, Data-Informed Approach. Partnership for College Completion. www.partnershipfcc.org

- Build an atmosphere of growth and shared practice in supporting transfer students in Chicago.
- Identify solutions that support specific populations and new models for local and national best practices.

Research shows that the existing transfer structure does not provide the proper support students need. The transfer process causes many students to navigate a new system with little knowledge of the best way forward and inappropriate support from an institution that is set up for a “traditional student.”² Currently, Black and Latine students make up more than 75 percent of City Colleges of Chicago enrollment, creating a need to address the disparate impact this population faces when going through the transfer process.³

The TIIM initiative looks to address this issue in the transfer process from two-year to four-year institutions. This RFP is for bachelor’s degree-granting institutions based in the Chicago region that are looking to improve the outcomes of their transfer students.

The TIIM RFP has been designed to increase impact across the educational and workforce systems as transfer outcomes for Chicago college students are improved. We aim to support bachelor’s degree granting institutions that can identify promising partnerships and create an innovative learning community promoting bachelor’s degree completion. This grantmaking engagement will include quarterly convenings with all partners to share data across the cohort of institutions and contribute to an annual public report. Successful grant applicants will also be required to submit annual reports on the grant and related activities, including a set of metrics defined in the RFP and disaggregated by race and gender.

Need/Opportunity Statement

While middle skills certifications provide access to quality jobs, degree attainment remains the strongest pathway to economic mobility, particularly when students pursue college majors related to in-demand fields.⁴ Given the diversity of community college students, effective transfer practices have the potential to diversify the bachelor’s degree institutions where community college students enroll after transfer, an even more important strategy for equity now that the U.S. Supreme Court has eliminated race-based admissions strategies.

Currently, 79 percent of students who start at community college in hopes of a more affordable pathway to a bachelor’s degree get their plans derailed by a fragmented system full of unexpected costs and administrative burdens that deter many students from

² Abrahamson, M., Power, C. (2024) “Addressing Transfer Barriers: A Student-Centered, Data-Informed Approach. Partnership for College Completion. www.partnershipfcc.org

³ [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgltclefindmkaj/https://www.ccc.edu/wp-content/uploads/CCC-FY23-Statistical-Digest-As-of-March-7-2024.pdf](https://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcgltclefindmkaj/https://www.ccc.edu/wp-content/uploads/CCC-FY23-Statistical-Digest-As-of-March-7-2024.pdf)

⁴ <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/3pathways/>

completing the transfer process.⁵ If students effectively utilize the transfer system, they can complete 60 credits at reduced cost at a community college, then transfer those credits to a bachelor's degree-granting institution for an additional 60 credits to complete their degree "In 2023–24, the average published tuition and fees for a full-time student at public two-year institutions nationally was \$3,990, compared with \$11,260 at public four-year colleges, according to the College Board.⁶ When transfer works, it produces the same final credential at a significantly reduced cost.

Transfer outcomes in Illinois are stronger than in most states, but there is plenty of room for dramatic improvements in the transfer student experience for Chicagoans. Institutional practices that serve transfer students well can lead to better-than-expected outcomes for institutions with relatively few resources or more educationally disadvantaged students...[particularly] if they change the way they serve transfer students and work more closely with their transfer partners.⁷

One of the most critical issues of concern for transfer students is wasted credits taken at the community college level. In 2017, the U.S. Department of Education highlighted the issue of wasted transfer credits as a significant concern and deserving of national attention, stating "students lost an estimated 43 percent of college credits when they transferred, or an estimated 13 credits."⁸

An article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* details the complexity of the credit transfer problem, "The barriers hide in the granularity, where bureaucratic inertia meets institutional self-interest — in the enrollment strategies of the university and its academic departments, in the attitudes of individual faculty members, in the individual interactions between advisers and students, and in the compatibility of something as seemingly inconsequential as course names and numbers."⁹ All sources concur that there are clear institutional solutions to improving the transfer process.

Goals and Outcomes

The goal of the Transfer Innovation Impact Model (TIIM) initiative is to identify and promote strategies that improve bachelor's degree completion within two to three years of transfer from community college programs for students who traditionally have had lower rates of completion including Black, Latine and low-income students in Chicago.

⁵ Abrahamson, M., Power, C. (2024) "Addressing Transfer Barriers: A Student-Centered, Data-Informed Approach. Partnership for College Completion. www.partnershipfcc.org

⁶ <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/community-college-faqs.html>

⁷ <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/tracking-transfer-institutional-state-effectiveness.pdf>

⁸ [US Government Accountability Office: Students Need More Information to Help Reduce Challenges in Transferring College Credits](#)

⁹ <https://www.chronicle.com/article/the-transfer-maze#:~:text=The%20transfer%20mess%20is%20one,to%20less%2Dselective%20public%20institutions>

Successful applicants will be part of a multiyear grantmaking engagement to innovate the transfer pathway through the following outcomes:

- Increase enrollment and persistence
 - # of transfer students enrolled
 - # of transfer students retained for year 2
- Increased graduation through transfer pathway with minimum time to degree
 - # of transfer students graduated with bachelor's degrees in 2 years
 - # of transfer students graduated with bachelor's degree in 3 years
 - Average # of transfer credits accepted per student (including electives)
 - Average # of transfer credits accepted toward major/degree (non-elective credits)

Priorities Strategies & Activities

Applications must be submitted by a bachelor's degree-granting institution in the Chicago area and require a partnership with an individual community college located in Cook County. Applications must also include at least one community or nonprofit partner as part of the student support effort. Budgets should include allocations for each of these partners. MOUs from all partners will be required for application.

The planning program model should include an outline of the three-year implementation plan, including the specific roles for partnerships with a community college and a nonprofit student support organization that together drive improved student outcomes.

Bachelor's degree granting institutions can submit no more than TWO applications for this planning RFP, each with a different community college. Each application will be considered independently as part of the grants cohort chosen through the RFP. Funded institutions will be required to share data, disaggregated by race and gender for all key metrics above throughout the application process and reporting. Data will be gathered, analyzed and shared in an annual public report.

This grantmaking opportunity will occur in two phases. In Phase 1, the TIIM initiative will award a minimum of five one-year planning grants of \$300,000 each. Successful Phase 1 grant applicants will be invited to submit an Implementation application during the planning grant phase. TIIM Phase 2 Implementation grants of up to \$1,700,000 over three years will be awarded to support the plans created during the planning process. The number of implementation grants awarded will be dependent on funds raised.

Grant recipients that will be eligible to apply for a Phase 2 TIIM grant would have created an implementation plan during Phase 1 with clear guidance on how they will achieve the following:

- Ensure all credits transfer and apply seamlessly
- Communicate clearly with students
- Provide clarity around costs

- Streamline time to degree

Phase 2 Implementation applications will be invited and submitted in the Winter/Spring of 2026 and will be evaluated competitively among all applying institutions. TIIM will look for plans that set dramatic targets and clear plans for improving the key program outcomes.

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; (c) or 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;
- Located within the following Illinois counties (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties);
- Partnering with a community college located in Cook County;
- Partnering with a community-based or nonprofit student support organization.

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, email grants@cct.org.

Email Lara Pruitt (lara.pruitt@kinshipfoundation.org) or Sonianne Lozada (slozada@cct.org) for programmatic and application content questions.

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.

We encourage grant applicants to identify a limited number of outcomes (1-2) and related measures of progress (3-5 across all outcomes) to those directly aligned with the RFP and your work.

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

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.

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 Grants Central before the grant seeker submits an application.

Late or incomplete applications will not be considered. 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.