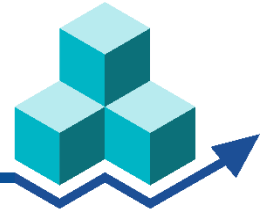# COOK COUNTY
STARTING BLOCK GRANTS

Building Capacity, Supporting Growth

2023 GRANT APPLICATION PACKET

Application Posting Date: August 7, 2023

Pre-Submittal Conference: August 16, 2023, 12 -1pm

Register at CookCountyIL.gov/JAC Grants

Application Deadline: Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. The deadline for consideration for 2023 funding is September 8, 2023.

Apply at CookCountyIL.gov/JAC Grants

Contact: Juandalynn Johnson, JAC Grants Management Director
JAC.Info@cookcountyil.gov

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Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle

COOK COUNTY
GOVERNMENT

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APPLICATION GUIDE

Introduction

Cook County relies on strong partnerships with community-based non-profit organizations to deliver a broad and diverse range of programs and services to residents and community stakeholders across Cook County. Organizations that are strong and healthy are better able to accomplish their missions, which in turn provides better service delivery to residents and the communities from where they live.

Smaller, hyperlocal organizations play an essential and distinct role by working to build relationships every day and supporting residents facing a wide array of personal and systemic challenges. These organizations are often most proximate to, and, anchored in the communities that they work in and/or serve, demonstrated in part by their mission to address community needs at the local level and through the provision of culturally responsive services to those residents who live within those communities. Most often, these are the same vulnerable communities marked by social risk factors that include but not limited to high poverty and unemployment rates, food insecurity, housing instability, lack of access to health care and transportation, high rates of crime and violence and an under investment in community and economic development. Despite the critical role they play within those vulnerable communities, many, including those currently funded by Cook County government, lack the critical resources, relationships and funding needed to innovate and grow as an organization.

The Cook County Starting Block Grant initiative seeks to support the internal capacity of these organizations to ensure that they have the resources beyond programmatic support, to strengthen their practices, infrastructure, and organizational health.

<u>Definitions</u>

For purposes of this grant application, **technical assistance** refers to the process of providing targeted support to an organization with a development need or problem. This includes any specialized service or skill, or in some cases tools, that an organization does not have within their organization structure but may be necessary to achieving organizational health.

Capacity Building refers to providing support to an organization to build its internal capacity and develop their infrastructure to help them grow as an organization. Capacity building is an investment in the effectiveness and future sustainability of an organization. This will support

the growth of each organization and ensure that those organizations are operating at a high capacity leading to better service delivery and sustainability.

Funding

This grant initiative is funded through the [Cook County Equity Special Purpose Fund](#), created to address historic and continued disinvestment and inequities in Cook County. Cook County will award up to $5 million in Starting Block Grants in 2023 with a subsequent grant award cycle planned for 2024. Awarded organizations will receive up to $100,000 in funding for capacity building over two years. The grant period for this first cycle of awards will run from November 1, 2023 – October 31, 2025.

Eligibility Criteria for Applicants

Organizations applying for a Cook County Starting Block Grant must meet all of the following eligibility criteria:

- Identify as a community based nonprofit organization with a 501c(3) status, (*no fiscal agents/sponsors are allowed for this opportunity*);
- Have an annual operating budget of $1 million or under;
- Be headquartered in Cook County (operating and providing services within the City of Chicago or Suburban Cook County);
- Demonstrate at least three years of experience of working at the local level to improve the lives of residents in historically disinvested and vulnerable communities through the provision of services and/or by addressing the many societal challenges that impact those communities. *Historically disinvested and vulnerable communities may include but are not necessarily limited to communities impacted over time by a lack of economic investment, declining property values and tax receipts, limited employment opportunities and household income, declining population, disproportionate exposure to crime and violence, or environmental and health hazards, or limited access to healthcare*.

Types of Capacity Building Support Allowed

The Capacity Building Starting Block Grant funds ***cannot*** *be used to support the provision of direct services, leasing and/or capital infrastructure projects or tactical items such as hardware/equipment, collateral materials, donor management software or website development*.

However, it can support a range of activities that address organizational capacity and technical assistance in any area that makes an organization stronger, including but not limited to mission, vision and strategy, governance and leadership, program delivery and impact, resource development, strategic relationships and internal operations and management.

As part of a broader effort to support the capacity building of its organizational partners, Cook County is also establishing a Cook County Readiness and Capacity Building program that will include a procured cohort of capacity building and technical assistance providers to support organization's capacity needs through an individual or group model. Applicants who request external forms of assistance such as peer mentoring, consultant services, coaching or other third-party methods for addressing organizational challenges may be offered an opportunity to connect to a provider within the County's cohort and funding will be adjusted accordingly.

Informed in part through a wealth of capacity building research, learnings and the 2017 Point the Way- Chicago Area Capacity Building Landscape Study, [see downloadable appendix], below are the seven dimensions of nonprofit capacities that contributes to a nonprofit's health and performance.

Seven Dimensions of Nonprofit Capacity

1. **Vision and impact model** - A clear and detailed description of the impact the organization is trying to create, mapped to the set of organizational activities that help produce that impact (e.g., Theory of Change)

2. **Governance and leadership** - A board and staff leadership that have the skills needed to work effectively together in service of the organization's mission

3. **Program delivery** - Staff, technology, facilities, and other capabilities needed to deliver programs effectively and in fidelity to the impact model

4. **Resource generation** - A strong funding model to guide resource generation, and the capabilities to secure resources over time

5. **Internal operations and management** - Includes technical functions such as IT, financial management, and internal/external communications, plus human resources management and strategic planning

6. **Evaluation and learning** - Tools, processes, infrastructure, and culture that support continuous program and organizational improvement

7. **Strategic relationships** - The ability to nurture and maintain the external relationships necessary for success, including program delivery partners, funding relationships, and political support

Capacity Building Project Examples

The below chart includes categories and examples of capacity building/ technical assistance projects that are allowable under the Cook County Starting Block Grant initiative. This is a non-exhaustive list, provided to give context to organizations considering and applying for funding under the initiative.

Organizational Capacity Category	Example Projects
Adaptive Capacities	
Adaptive capabilities refers to the ability of your organization to monitor, assess, and respond to internal and external changes	➤ Developing or refining a **strategic plan** ➤ Assessing **organizational effectiveness** ➤ Developing or enhancing **organizational financial plans** ➤ **Salary and benefits to support the expansion of infrastructure personnel** to meet the operational needs of the organization (examples: requesting funds to support a full time CFO or a part time data analyst) ➤ Exploring and evaluating the potential for **strategic/collaborative models** with the goal of developing a sustainable network or integrating/merging existing organizations, sharing back-office supports, and/or shared decision-making and resources
Leadership Capacities	
The ability of your organization's leaders to inspire, prioritize, make decisions,	➤ Developing a stronger board through **board development**

provide direction, and innovate to achieve the organization's mission	➤ Creating a **leadership succession plan** or addressing staff or board leadership transitions
	➤ Conducting **community needs assessments** to inform leadership direction
	➤ Developing skill sets of organization leaders through **professional development**
	➤ **DEIJ or trauma informed** training for board/staff

Management Capacities	
A non-profit organization is more likely to reach its goals if it is well managed. Management capacity is the ability of a nonprofit organization to ensure the effective and efficient use of organizational resources	➤ Developing efficient operational processes including **standard operating procedures**
	➤ Developing or **enhancing management support systems** such as the quality of staff supervision
	➤ Improving processes for **internal communications**
	➤ **Program management** and evaluation
	➤ **Management training** and supports

Technical Capacities	
Addressing technical capacities can be a broad category but typically refers to performance of the work of the organization: delivering programs and services. To do so, an organization needs solid finances with reliable and diverse revenue streams, staff with required skill sets, clear communications and accountability and the data infrastructure to make informed data-driven decisions	➤ Accounting and budgeting improvements
	➤ **Data collection, management**, and analysis to inform business decisions
	➤ Fundraising plan development/developing diverse revenue sources
	➤ Strategic **financial management**
	➤ **Training** and **development** for staff in necessary program skills
	➤ Technology improvements or database assistance
	➤ **Planning for Marketing** and **Communications** campaigns that support awareness and growth of the organization *related strategic efforts not materials*

GRANT APPLICATION

Application Instructions

To submit an application for capacity building funding under the Cook County Starting Block Grant initiative, visit the Cook County Justice Advisory Council's Grants website: CookCountyIL.gov/JAC Grants.

Applicant organizations will submit all application components via an online form that will open on August 23, 2023. The form will prompt you to answer the application questions and upload required documents detailed in this grant application. Organizations are encouraged to draft responses to application questions in a separate document as all application submissions are final.

The application deadline for 2023 funding is Friday, September 8, 2023. Applications submitted after the September 8th deadline will be considered for the next round of funding, based on the availability of funds. Currently, the next round of funding is anticipated in the Spring of 2024.

Application Components

Section 1- Organizational Information (0 points)

This information is required to ensure a complete application; however, the information will not be used for evaluation purposes.

- Demographic Data
- Address
- Name, title, and email address for Executive Director/CEO
- Name, title, and email address for point of contact
- List all geographic areas where services are provided
- Number of years organization has been in existence
- Size of annual operating budget
- Primary Service Sectors [please select the sector that most closely aligns with the core services your organization provides]
    - Arts and Culture
    - Community and Economic Development
    - Education

- o Environment
- o Health
- o Housing
- o Human Rights
- o Human Services
- o Transportation
- o Violence Prevention (includes organizations experienced in youth development and community-based violence intervention strategies)
- o Other [please state]

- Are you currently receiving grant funding from a Cook County agency or department? If so, please provide details.
  - o Yes
  - o No

- Are you currently receiving technical assistance, capacity building services and/or capacity building funding from any entity? If so, please detail the type of assistance, timeframe, funding amount and entity providing the services/funding.

- Have you previously received technical assistance, capacity building services and/or capacity building funding from any entity? If so, please detail the type of assistance received, timing, funding amount and entity providing the services/funding.

Section 2: Application Quality and Completeness (5 points)

The below checklist of application components and required items should be used to ensure a complete application.

Component	Items to Include
Grant Application Narrative	o Responses to all questions in Grant Application
Budget Form	o [Budget Form](#) - (Excel Spreadsheet *download at [CookCountyIL.gov/JACGrants](#)*) Provide a (2) year budget that should include line item expenditures and a detailed narrative for expenditure that justifies the need for the expense.
Financial Qualifications Documents	o Organization operating budget for the current budget year o An audited financial statement

	If an audited financial statement is not available, a statement signed by the Chair of the organization's Board of Director's indicating the organization's actual revenues and expenses, and a statement of financial position, for the most recently completed fiscal year
Other Supporting Documentation	o Organizational chart o IRS Determination Letter of 501(c)3 status o Articles of Incorporation o A Certificate of Good Standing with the Illinois Secretary of State
*When you submit your application, items within each component should be submitted together as one file. Please note that missing the above listed items can render the application incomplete and not be scored.	

Section 3: Budget (5 points)

Please complete the downloadable budget form available at CookCountyIL.gov/JACGrants. Provide a (2) year budget that includes line-item expenditures and a detailed narrative for expenditure that justifies the need for the expense.

- Funds *may* be requested for the expansion of infrastructure personnel [Examples: requests to increase part time CFO to full time or hire a data analyst]
- Note the following _unallowable_ costs*:*
    - Direct service provision
    - Leasing and/or capital infrastructure projects
    - Hardware/equipment
    - Collateral materials (i.e., marketing materials, brochures, flyers, etc.)
    - Donor management software or website development

Section 4: Alignment and Impact (20 points)

Limit all answers to 500 words or less each.

1. How is the proposed capacity building project consistent with the intent of the grant?

2. Discuss the future you see for the work for which you are requesting funds for. How would the funds help address your stated capacity building challenges/needs, increase the impact of your work and/or improve your organizational health?

3. How will you know if you were successful? What metrics and/or outcomes will you track to measure your progress? *(The metrics/outcomes that you set should align with*

your stated capacity building project. Examples may include the % increase in new partnerships, relationships or grant opportunities, % increase in diversity of funding streams, % of staff that participated in trainings, improvement of knowledge skills and attitudes through pre-post test, % of cost savings)

Section 5: Narrative and Demonstration of Need (30 points)

The below questions make up your grant application narrative. *Limit all answers to 500 words or less.*

1. Please describe your organization, its history and experience, the populations you serve including geographic areas of service and your provision of services. In your response, please also identify any current and historical impacts of underlying social determinants, vulnerabilities and/or historic disinvestments that have impacted those you serve and the communities in which they live. How would you describe the strengths of your organization?

2. What capacity building challenges/barriers does your organization currently face and what are your organizational needs? In your response, please note whether your organization has utilized an organizational assessment, community needs assessment, strategic plan and/or capacity building plan to inform your answer.

3. Describe your proposed capacity building project (including activities, tools, services, stakeholders) and the specific area(s) you have selected to address and why. [*Note: your proposed capacity building project must align with the required completion of the line-item budget template provided.*]

    a. What are the steps of your project and timeline?
    b. How was this project and approach selected?
    c. Describe the proposed project outputs (products or deliverables)

4. If your funding request includes external forms of assistance such as peer mentoring, consultant services, coaching or other third-party methods, have you identified and/or contracted a consultant?

    a. If so, please provide information as to their proposed scope of services, background, and experience.

    b. If not, would you be interested in accessing the network of capacity building and technical assistance providers that will be procured through Cook County?

5. [Optional Question] Is there anything else you would like us to know about the work of your organization, your needs, the documents you submitted or your application itself?

Section 6: Community Presence (40 points)

Please provide a description of your organization's experience in addressing the needs of residents in historically disinvested communities, including how you work with community residents, individuals with lived experience, stakeholders and/or other community-based peer organizations. Please list at least three community partners you work more closely with and/or those who have benefited from your work. *Limit answer to 500 words or less each.*

Applicants must demonstrate that their organization has at least three years' experience doing the work of that the applicant 501c(3) reports doing. This experience can be demonstrated by including the experience and resumes of all key personnel in the organization, as well as presenting corroborating material such as media coverage or video links to previous work, as well as successful fundraising campaigns including evidence of receiving grants from any entity (including any Cook County entity) along with what the grants were for as well as any award letters received proving such work.

Evaluation

The below chart summarizes the categories and point value system that will be used to score applications for capacity building funding under the Cook County Starting Block Grant initiative.

Category & Point Value	Description
Quality and Completeness *(5 points)*	Are all required application components included for sound evaluation of the application?
Budget *(5 points)*	Is the Budget appropriate and cost effective? Are the line items budgeted justified and aligned with the project narrative as described in question 4?
Alignment and Impact *(20 Points)*	Is the proposed capacity building project consistent with the intent of this grant program?

	Does the proposed project align with the stated challenges and needs articulated by the organization? Is the timeline and steps they have identified reasonable and well thought out? Is the proposed project likely to strengthen the organization and make it more sustainable in the future?
Narrative and Demonstration of Need *(30 points)*	Does the applicant clearly articulate their challenges and capacity building needs?
Community Presence *(40 points)*	Has the organization demonstrated that it is providing services and/or addressing the needs of residents within vulnerable or historically disinvested communities?