



**impact**  
grants  
chicago

*connecting women for collective impact*

# Grant Applicant Information Session

September 10, 2025

# Introduction to Impact Grants Chicago

## Impact Grants Chicago:

- Is a women's collective giving organization
  - Every year we give \$100,000 grants to Chicago nonprofits
- Gives unrestricted grants
- Is completely a volunteer-run organization
- Operates on the one-woman, one-vote model
  - Decisions about grants are made by our membership



# Agenda

- Introductions
- Overview of Impact Grants Chicago process and calendar
- Tips to craft your strongest application for an Impact Grant
- Q&A

A video recording of this meeting and the deck will be available on the Impact Grants Chicago website in a few days.



# 2025-26 Grant Cycle Process + Calendar

## **2025**

Sept – Oct: Grant cycle opens with Letter of Inquiry

Approximately **135 LOIs** submitted

December: Applicants notified of eligibility

Approximately **120 eligible LOIs**

## **2026**

January: Grant Review Committees (7 GRCs) review LOIs

**All eligible LOIs** reviewed

Late January - early February: 35 organizations invited to submit Full Grant Applications

**35 Full Grant Applications**

Mid February: Full Grant applications due

Mid March: 21 applicants invited to host Insightful Visits

**21 Insightful Visits**

Mid April: Insightful Visits conducted

Early May: Grant finalists notified; Finalist info session

**7 finalists**

Late May: Grant Awards Celebration. Finalists present; entire IGC membership votes for Impact and Merit Grant winners

**3-4 Impact grants**  
**3-4 Merit grants**



# Eligibility Requirements

*Ensure you meet all of the eligibility requirements.*

- Be classified as a “Public Charity” with tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code for a minimum of 36 months prior to applying for the grant.
- Be based and operate within the City of Chicago.
- Provide the majority of services in the City of Chicago.
- Independently file an IRS Form 990 (unless exempt by federal law).
- Report total revenue for the last full fiscal year between \$1 million and \$8 million. If exempt from filing a Form 990, must meet this revenue requirement in the most recent audited financial statements..
- Be independently and separately audited. If your nonprofit is part of a consolidated organization, the consolidated audited financial statements must include consolidating statements (statement of activities and balance sheet) for the applicant, or must reflect the financial results presented in the IRS Form 990.
- Use the full amount of the grant within 24 months.

# What Impact Grants Chicago Does Not Fund

- Capital projects to property that are:
  - not owned by the applicant as of the Full Grant Application due date;
  - leased under a lease not in effect as of the Full Grant Application due date; or
  - leased under a lease with less than five years remaining on the lease as of June 1 of the Impact Grants Award year.
- Projects involving acquisition of real estate
- Debt reduction
- Pass-through grants
- Interim or bridge funding
- Fundraising events
- Endowments
- Private Foundations
- Legislative or political activities
- Fraternal, sectarian, religious and other organizations where the grant is intended for the principal benefit of the organization's own members or adherents.
- Programs involving inherently religious activities or if participation in religious activities is required in order to receive services.

## 2 Step Written application process:

### Step 1- Letter of Inquiry (LOI)

**Introduce your organization to a team of volunteer reviewers with your mission and an overview of the work you do and the people you serve.**

- Describe your organization and the work you do.
- Describe how you measure the effectiveness of your services.
- Describe your organization's current top three strategic priorities.
- Tell us a success story about a client/participant who has benefited from your services.



# 2 step written application process

## Step 2- Full Grant Application (FGA)

- Expand your story. Tell us more about your organization and your services.
  - What are your spending priorities? Would an Impact Grant change these priorities?
  - Changes to the organization since the LOI
- Details about your organization
  - Staff
  - Board Members
  - Volunteers
  - Donors





# Financial Documents

## LOI:

- IRS Form 990 from 2023 or 2024. If you do not file a Form 990, your most recent audit will be used to confirm revenue eligibility.
- IRS charitable status determination letter.
- Most recent audit, no older than the 2024 fiscal year.
  - If you are a consolidated entity, please look closely at our eligibility requirements on our website to ensure that you are eligible.

## Full Grant:

- You will be asked to resubmit your current IRS Form 990 and audit due to the length of time between the LOI and Full Grant submission dates.
- Internally prepared documents for current fiscal year
  - Statement of Activities
  - Balance Sheet
  - Budget



# Unrestricted Grants

- Impact Grants are **unrestricted grants**.
- We want to learn about your organization and its priorities
- If your organization advances to the full grant stage, we will ask about your spending priorities over the next two years. We will also ask if a \$100,000 Impact Grant would change your spending priorities and, if so, how.





# Writing Your Letter of Inquiry and Full Grant Application

# Impact

***Impact Grants Chicago is interested in providing funds that will have an impact on our community – it is in our name!***

- In your application, we would like to hear how this grant will impact your target population and the community you are serving.
- We ask you to tell a "story" about someone your organization served. This is a helpful way for our reviewers to understand your impact.
- Tell us about the community need for your services.



# Clear and Concise Narrative

- Impact Grants Chicago (IGC) is an all-volunteer organization. We do not have professional grant-making staff. Answer all the questions as if you are talking with a donor, not a peer.
- Do not use jargon or acronyms.
- Don't leave us wondering or guessing. Our review process does not allow for follow-up contact with applicants.



# Measuring Outcomes

***Share how you define and measure impact.***

- We ask to describe your organization's outcomes and how you measure them. Clear explanations of the data supporting your outcomes and how you chose those data points is very helpful to the reviewers.
- Bring your outcomes to life - if possible, give us an example of how you adjusted your service(s) or program(s) based on outcomes.



# Writing Applications

***Keep in mind that our Grant Review and Financial Review Committees (more than 30 people) will be reading and discussing your application.***

- Take advantage of the narrative questions to make compelling statements. Tell us your story.
- We include character limits for responses in our forms. Please do not exceed those limits.



# Grant Resources

***The following resources are available on the Impact Grants Chicago website,  
[www.impactgrantschicago.org](http://www.impactgrantschicago.org)***

- ✓ Eligibility and Requirements
- ✓ What Impact Grants Chicago does not fund
- ✓ Letter of Inquiry questions, in PDF format
- ✓ Full Grant Application questions, in PDF format
- ✓ Grant FAQs

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# Questions?

