

# THE CHICAGO COMMUNITY TRUST

## UNITY CHALLENGE 2010

### REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

#### OVERVIEW

For 95 years, The Chicago Community Trust, the region's community foundation, has connected the generosity of donors with community needs by making grants to organizations working to improve metropolitan Chicago.

The economic downturn that began in 2008 continues to adversely affect many people in the Chicago region; unemployment, hunger, and homelessness remain at high levels. In November 2008, the Trust established the Unity Challenge, designed to provide matching funds to donors' contributions generating additional resources to address the increased demand for human services resulting from the current economic crisis.

The Unity Challenge aims to anticipate needs and deploy philanthropic resources quickly, strategically and effectively to expand or enhance the capacity of non-profit service providers to meet the urgent needs of community residents. Now in its second year, the Trust continues to apply the resources of the Unity Fund to address increased safety net needs and time-sensitive community issues.

#### 2010 UNITY CHALLENGE GRANTS

In May of this year, the Trust provided the first round of 2010 Unity Challenge funding to support the expansion of food assistance programs, provide emergency support to prevent homelessness and offer medical assistance for the uninsured. Support was also provided to prevent loss of housing and homeownership as the result of high rates of foreclosures in several communities.

A second round of funding will respond to conditions created by recently announced cuts in public funding that will adversely affect special populations and jeopardize the delivery of vital services.

As a result of cuts in public funding, many human services providers may find themselves trying to meet the needs of an increased number of clients with reduced funding, or delayed payment of awarded funding. The Trust is deeply concerned that in some instances, programs funded primarily or entirely by state funding may be at risk for severe reductions or potential elimination; and in some cases, the viability of provider organizations themselves may be at-risk. These conditions could pose immediate problems at the neighborhood level, when much-needed programs are potentially forced to close and critical needs may go unmet, and may undermine the long-term capacity of our human service system.

# REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Working from the premise that all communities, especially those with high unemployment and poverty rates, need to have a safety net to assist the most vulnerable residents during this time of economic recession, the Trust seeks to support efforts to ensure that key services to populations are continued regardless of the recession and state budget crisis. The Trust recognizes that innovative efforts are most likely necessary at this time to meet community needs given shrinking public and private resources. The Trust also assumes that in some instances, infusions of new revenue may be sufficient to carry over programs to more promising financial times; in others significant restructuring or merger of provider agencies, or even agency closure, may be necessary.

This Request for Proposal (RFP) seeks to provide bridge funding for:

- a) selected important programs in areas including aging, domestic violence, developmental disabilities and mental health services that have been targeted for funding cuts by the state and the city while at the same time experiencing increased demand for services; and
- b) restructuring of the human services sector to ensure that provider capacity remains in place in the county's most distressed communities and that those human service organizations operate as efficiently as possible because of resource constraints.

**Note: Because of the sensitive nature of the actions that you may propose, your proposal will be kept in strictest confidence.**

## **Total Awards**

Approximately \$1.5 million is available for grants under this RFP.

## **Eligible Projects**

### *Program-level Projects*

- 1) Meet increased programmatic needs.** Projects that respond to a demonstrated expansion of service caseload above previous levels because of increased client demand. This includes funding for direct services or alternative strategies for providing needed client services. Priority will be given to agencies experiencing funding cuts for service areas where there is increased demand.
- 2) Program conclusion or transition.** Projects that provide for the orderly closing of programs because of loss of funding or movement of clients. This may include assisting clients with locating comparable services at another site, providing transitional or concluding services, or blending a closing program into another complementary program.

### *Agency-level Projects*

- 3) Agency streamlining, restructuring, or shutdown.** Projects that create greater agency efficiency, necessitated by either the government funding crisis or the economic recession. Types of eligible projects would include agency mergers, collaborations, cost-

sharing, and back-office or other service efficiencies. Proposed projects must show how agency change will lead to sustained or improved service to at-risk persons, how the project will result in a stronger agency infrastructure better equipped to weather economic hardship, and cost savings. Community-wide planning processes aimed at addressing multiple local service needs will also be considered.

Support would also be considered for the one-time costs associated with closing an agency and transitioning the client population to a new service provider.

<b>Eligible Service Programs</b>		
Providers of services may submit a proposal in any of the categories for which they are eligible. <b>However, only one application per agency will be accepted.</b>		
	Eligible Projects	Eligible Provider Areas
<b>Program-level projects</b>	1) Meet increased programmatic need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aging</li> <li>• Domestic Violence</li> <li>• Developmental Disabilities</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> </ul>
	2) Program conclusion or transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aging</li> <li>• Domestic Violence</li> <li>• Developmental Disabilities</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> <li>• Child Care and/or Youth</li> <li>• Homeless Services</li> </ul>
<b>Agency-level projects</b>	3) Agency streamlining, restructuring, or shutdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aging</li> <li>• Domestic Violence</li> <li>• Developmental Disabilities</li> <li>• Mental Health</li> <li>• Child Care and/or Youth</li> <li>• Homeless Services</li> </ul>

**Organization Eligibility Criteria**

- Organizations with 501(c)(3) designation, or those that have a fiscal sponsor with a 501(c)(3) designation and public agencies.
- Serving primarily Cook County and/or the City of Chicago. Organizations located or serving communities outside of Cook County may apply and would be considered should funding resources permit.

## **Application Process**

Organizations interested in applying for funding under this special initiative must complete the application form. **Proposals are due on Friday, August 13 at 5 p.m. There will be no exceptions to the deadline for late proposals.**

## **Review and Selection Process**

Applicants may receive a site visit, telephone call and/or other type of communication from Trust staff as part of the proposal review process.

Grant proposals will be evaluated, on a competitive basis, using the following criteria:

- Significance of need to be met in the community by the proposed program
- Extent to which program will expand or sustain services into the future
- Clarity of project description and project activities regarding steps to be taken to achieve desired outcomes
- Achievable timeline that corresponds to the key activities
- Meaningful benchmarks and indicators of success
- Effective strategy
- Organizational capacity to implement project—including staffing and leadership, operational and fiscal management
- Established track record in specific program content area or potential to secure needed content expertise

Grant decisions for the Unity Challenge will be finalized at the meeting of the Trust's Executive Committee on September 21, 2010.