



Overview: Youth Homelessness Innovation Fund

Goal

To improve outcomes for young people experiencing housing instability and homelessness by spurring creativity, enabling disruption, and encouraging risk, thereby advancing new opportunities, catalyzing bold solutions and bolstering the momentum of the [Chicago Task Force on Homeless Youth](#) and the Youth Advisory Board.

Background

Locally and nationally, a collective movement has been building. A broad range of institutions and sectors have been assessing how to better leverage individual and collective work to address and ultimately resolve persistent issues facing our communities. This work has led to increased coordination and collaboration for greater results, new program models, and new ways of deploying resources to support these efforts.

As funders and advocates for positive systems change, we, too, feel the urgency to further coordinate and collaborate for greater impact. As a result, [Crown Family Philanthropies](#) and the [Polk Bros. Foundation](#), long-time supporters of efforts to prevent and end youth homelessness, have joined together to encourage exciting local momentum in this area of work.

Our collective commitment is to braid together a set of three investments, totaling \$500,000:

- **Investments in work to address persistent resource gaps:** in the following Request for Proposal, we outline investments intended to move the field forward faster to improve outcomes for young people experiencing and at-risk of homelessness. We acknowledge that there are less-visible and -resourced, yet highly promising, efforts underway to connect, house and support young people, which are driven and defined by them. These efforts could present valuable opportunities for young people to lead while we all learn, iterate and scale.
- **Investments to encourage new ways of leveraging currently available resources:** we will provide funding to bring the [A Way Home America 100-Day Challenge](#) to Chicago. Building on the success of Chicago's [100-Day Ending Veteran Homelessness Initiative](#), the effort will stimulate intense collaboration, innovation, and execution in pursuit of an ambitious 100-day goal.
- **Investments to bring additional resources to our city:** through HUD's announcement of a new round of funding for the [Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program](#) (YHDP), we will support the [Chicago Continuum of Care's](#) application. YHDP provides funding and technical assistance for the development and implementation of innovative coordinated community plans, including funding to invest in new housing and services.

These three threads will comprise a collective strategy, and will be woven together to develop a stronger overall cord of support for the many exemplary organizations - both established and emerging - preventing and ending youth homelessness in Chicago.



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Youth Homelessness Innovation Fund Request for Proposals
Application Deadline: June 3rd, 2019

This Request for Proposals (RFP) has been informed by young people involved with the [Chicago Continuum of Care](#) who opted to provide feedback in group-based sessions between March 21st and April 3, 2019.

Priority Areas

Having heard from young people that investments to end youth homelessness must be informed by them, and their voices must also be represented in proposed solutions, priority will be given to proposals that demonstrate how young people have influenced and will have ongoing leadership in the proposed solution.

In addition, given research that demonstrates that young people who identify as both LGBTQ+ and black or multiracial have some of the highest rates of homelessness, priority will be given to proposals that demonstrate how the needs and experiences of these populations are centered in the work.

Young people also noted a number of populations for whom service gaps exist:

- Single, female-identifying young people at high-risk for abuse, trafficking and sexual violence, including those without children who are not currently prioritized by existing HUD and city-funded resources.
- Young people who have been justice involved.
- Young people involved with, or having previously been involved with, the Illinois Department of Children & Family Services and foster care.
- Young people who are survivors of intimate partner violence.
- Those at the transition point of aging out of systems and services.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to identify if and how proposals serve these populations.

Young people also named a number of structural factors that enhance program efficacy and youth retention and satisfaction, including inclusive screening processes, clear program guidelines that foster consistency, restorative processes that take a developmental approach to corrective action, safety practices that minimize harm, and small caseload ratios that allow for individualized attention and planning. Organizations are encouraged to outline how they will structure service delivery to advance these standards.

Solutions must be consistent with low-barrier, harm reduction, and trauma-informed models, all evidence-based frameworks. Applicants should specifically state how comprehensive training and ongoing coaching and support for direct service staff, who are tasked with operationalizing these frameworks in day-to-day service provision and milieu management, will be implemented. Young people identified the critical role of high quality case management, including adequate training on these standards for all direct service staff. To that end, applicants are encouraged to demonstrate the ways in which they will resource, train and support direct service teams to operate within these frameworks and hold them accountable to them.



Guidelines

The Youth Homelessness Innovation Fund will award grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$300,000 to nonprofit organizations or collaborations proposing activities that promote bold, disruptive, and transformation solutions to promote housing stability for young people.

The Fund seeks to foster creative and effective solutions to persistent challenges young people experience in their efforts to attain stable housing, with an eye toward sustaining viable programs through ongoing private funding. Applicants are encouraged to think and plan beyond existing approaches and propose bold ideas that move the goal of housing stability for youth experiencing and at-risk of homelessness forward, faster.

The Fund is designed to be a vehicle for two types of innovation activities:

- The implementation of promising, but yet-to-be-tested, innovations.
- The scaling of innovations that have demonstrated ability to substantively shift the way Chicagoans approach housing stability for young people.

In both cases, investments are intended to resource solutions that remove barriers to housing stability, engage non-traditional partners to expand the range of impact, eliminate cross-organization and cross-sector silos, and promise to shift the system of service delivery towards greater efficacy. Collaboration among different types of organizations, including civic, faith-based, and community associations that may not be 501 (c)(3) organizations or homeless services organizations is strongly encouraged. Applicants are urged to consider how proposed alliances and collaborations could reshape and expand the possible solutions available by including a diversity of perspective and approach. An individual organization may be included in multiple funding applications if it is part of more than one proposed collaborative project.

Needs identified by young people that these funds may be used to address include:

- Employment and education pathways that involve paid internships, on-the-job training, paid peer coaching roles for young people with lived experience, and programs that allow young people to explore vocational pathways at the intersection of their interests.
- Expanded independent living options and independent living supports, including land-use pilots like vacant land and city property repurposing.
- Practical and robust life skills and social-emotional supports to prepare for successful transition to and retention of housing.
- Peer-to-peer approaches and paid peer coach or support roles within programs.
- Robust transition and after care supports for youth exiting other systems, inclusive of those aging out of services at 18 or 24 years old.
- Ways to protect young people's vital documents and make them easily accessible in the long term.
- Expanded real-time, crowd-sourced resource and information guides targeted to the needs of young people and readily accessible to them.
- Expanded outreach resources with income supports (i.e. bus cards, food gift cards, hygiene kits, charging stations, diapers, wipes, female hygiene items, socks, shoes, etc.).



Example uses of funds to address the aforementioned challenges could include, but are not limited to:

- Development of a cloud-based, online scheduling system for case management appointments for young people and corresponding virtual appointment capability.
- Seed funding to repurpose vacant or unused buildings for creative youth housing models.
- Youth-led development of a set of universal expectations and service delivery guidelines for programs serving young people to enhance consistency and efficacy.
- Establishment of a peer-support coaching program to augment existing programming and provide job training to young people.
- Creation of a centralized, cloud-based, secure online storage option for vital documents to augment accessibility and security of young people's documents.
- Expansion of existing apps or resources to include the opportunity for user-generated content about available supportive services, outreach programs, and basic need resources.

Eligibility

Collaborative applications must be submitted by a lead organization who will accept and manage the funds consistent with the proposal.

As stated previously, successful applications will demonstrate that those most affected by youth homelessness are informing and leading the solution and that efforts are accountable to low-barrier, harm reduction, and trauma-informed models, all evidence-based frameworks.

To that end and based on the feedback of young people, eligible proposals will:

1. **Foster youth leadership and voice** through programs and activities that are based on young people's feedback and ideas for how to prevent and reduce homelessness. Youth Advisory Board members may be willing to provide training and advice on program design via their [request process](#) and with stipend support.
2. **Increase awareness and connectedness** by building and engaging a broader network of support for activities that promote young people's housing stability.
3. **Support youth self-efficacy** (sense of power) by providing opportunities for paid and unpaid peer-to-peer supports within programs, leadership opportunities, employment and vocational exploration, education, and skill-building, particularly life skills.
4. **Minimize harm and trauma** by connecting young people with support, particularly in a peer-to-peer approach, providing training and accountability for staff and fostering safe spaces for youth, particularly gender non-conforming youth and youth of color.
5. Attend to the **social and emotional needs** of young people at various stages of development by promoting relationship development, positive communication, restorative practice, and youth-directed efforts to build community and chosen family.
6. **Engender housing stability** in responsive and diverse ways.



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The opportunity is open to organizations that:

- Have 501(c)(3) designations or fiscal agents with a 501(c)(3) status. Collaborations may include organizations that do not have a 501(c)(3) designation.
- Provide services to young people, broadly, and young people at-risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- Work on other community issues that correlate to, or have significant impact on, the long-term stability and resilience of young people, related to housing stability.
- Provide the majority of services in Chicago and to Chicago residents.

Parameters and Requirements of the Grant

- Term: one-year grant.
- Grant amount: range between \$10,000-\$300,000
- Final report: grantees will be required to submit a two-page reflection of their initiative by July 17, 2020.
- Grantee convening. These grants have the potential to provide significant learnings and foster collaboration. Grantees will meet prior to the conclusion of activities to share their experiences with members of the [Chicago Task Force on Homeless Youth](#) so that lessons learned can benefit others and be used to inform future planning.

Grantee Selection and Oversight

As a collaborative fund, each interested funder will provide its funding in accordance with its respective processes and agreements. An Advisory Council has been established to make grant recommendations. Members include:

- Caprice Williams, Youth Advisory Board
- Christy Prah, Program Officer, Crown Family Philanthropies
- Debbie Reznick, Senior Program Officer, Polk Bros. Foundation
- Maura McCauley, Director of Homeless Prevention, Policy and Planning, Chicago Department of Family and Supportive Services
- Dominique Steward, Program Analyst, Crown Family Philanthropies

How to Apply

By June 3rd, 2019, organizations requesting funds should submit a proposal up to 10 pages long, at least double-spaced, with standard font size and margins, to ApplyYouthRFP@PolkBrosFdn.org addressing the following:

- Initiative name, problem statement, visionary goal, how it contributes to ending youth homelessness, definition of success, and measurable goals.
- Role of young people in identifying, planning for, implementing and evaluating solutions to persistent challenges to stable housing for young people. Specifically, *how will young people give feedback throughout this process, how will the initiative respond to that feedback, and how does the initiative and its staff show accountability to young people who have experienced complex trauma?*
- Planned activities, community partners, expected participants and anticipated outcomes.
- Description of how the activities are consistent with, and how will service provision staff be trained for and held accountable to low-barrier, harm reduction, and trauma-informed models. Specifically, *how will staff be resourced to operationalize these models? What do these models look*



like in practice day-to-day within the initiative? Are there limitations that get in the way of truly embodying these frameworks for young people that will be addressed through this initiative?

- How the proposed initiative attends to priority populations and/or priority services identified by youth and reflected in this RFP.
- How the initiative will raise awareness, foster connectedness and build a network of support for young people.
- How the activities will spur creativity, enable disruption, encourage risk, and improve outcomes for young people experiencing homelessness or housing instability.
- How the activities support and add to the work outlined in the Chicago Continuum of Care's Youth [Blueprint](#) and [Youth Strategy](#).
- Chicago geographies and/or community(ies) to be served.
- Qualifications of the applicant and collaborative members, if applicable, including existing programming and success to-date.

Applicants must also submit the following, which will not count toward the total 10-page limit:

- IRS determination letter for the requesting organization or the organization requesting funds on behalf of a collaborative.
- Total annual operating budget and most recent audit of the requesting organization or organization requesting funds on behalf of a collaborative.
- If the initiative includes a partnership, Memos of Understanding or Letters of Agreements
- Budget for requested funds (including any partner allocations of funding).
- If desired, applicants may also submit an outcomes table, which will not count toward the 10-page limit.

Questions?

An optional in-person technical assistance (TA) session will be held on May 2nd from 3pm – 4pm at the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, 1615 W. Chicago Avenue. (The room number will be determined later.) Attending the TA session is encouraged but is not required to be considered for funding. **Please RSVP by April 29th to ApplyYouthRFP@PolkBrosFdn.org.**

Applicant questions can also be sent to the above email address and will be answered as soon as possible.

Timeline

- **April 18, 2019:** Application opens
- **May 2nd, 2019:** In-person TA session
- **June 3, 2019:** Deadline for full proposal
- **June 4 – 14, 2019:** Grant decisions finalized
- **June 17 – 28, 2019:** Grant notification and disbursement of grant awards
- **July 1, 2019:** Grant term begins
- **January 2020:** Convening of all grant awardees
- **July 17, 2020:** Final report due



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Reporting

Each applicant will be asked to submit a short (2-page) final report to ApplyYouthRFP@PolkBrosFdn.org that covers the following:

- Who was impacted?
- What was achieved?
- What were the project's top three significant accomplishments?
- What was learned?
- What did not work and why?
- What were the main structural, systemic or external factors that positively or negatively impacted the project?
- How the money was spent compared to submitted budget?



Youth Homelessness Innovation Fund Grant Application

Guidelines

- Proposal is due **June 3, 2019**.
- Organizations requesting funds must submit a proposal of no more than 10 pages, at least double-spaced with standard font size and margins, to ApplyYouthRFP@PolkBrosFdn.org. Organizations must also submit, as attachments, the following, which do not count toward the total page limit:
 - IRS determination letter for the requesting organization or the organization requesting funds on behalf of a collaborative.
 - Total annual operating budget and most recent audit of the requesting organization or organization requesting funds on behalf of a collaborative.
 - If the initiative includes a partnership, Memos of Understanding or Letters of Agreements
 - Budget for requested funds (including any partner allocations of funding).
 - If desired, applicants may also submit an outcomes table, which will not count toward the 10-page limit.

Requesting Organization

Brief history of agency, mission, and descriptions of population served/engaged. Include geographical service area, if applicable.

Does the requesting organization or lead organization have a 501(c)(3) tax exemption?

Fiscal Agent organization

If this organization does not have a 501(c)(3) tax exemption, please include name of organization serving as fiscal agent.

Request organization or Fiscal Agent Tax ID#

Requesting organization or Fiscal Agent's mailing address

Collaborative Description (if applicable)

- List of partners engaged in the proposal.
- Qualifications of the applicant and collaborative, if applicable, including existing programming and success to date.



Initiative Name

Is the proposed outcome from this grant a new work/collaboration or work already in process?

Amount Requested

Estimated Total Cost of the Project

Project Description

Describe the project. Please include:

- Problem statement, visionary goal and how it contributes to ending youth homelessness, definition of success.
- Role of young people in planning for, implementing and evaluating solutions to persistent challenges to stable housing for young people. Specifically, how will young people give feedback throughout this process, how will the initiative respond to that feedback, and how will the initiative and staff show accountability to young people who have experienced complex trauma?

Activities

- Planned activities and expected participants.
- How will the activities be consistent with, and service provision staff trained for and held accountable to, low-barrier, harm reduction, and trauma-informed models? Specifically, how are staff resourced to operationalize these models? What do these models look like in practice day-to-day? Are there limitations that get in the way of truly embodying these frameworks for young people that will be addressed through this initiative?
- How the initiative will attend to priority populations and/or priority services identified by youth and reflected in the RFP.
- How the initiative will raise awareness, foster connectedness and build a network of support.
- How the activities will spur creativity, enable disruption, encourage risk, and improve outcomes for young people experiencing homelessness or housing instability.
- How the activities will support and add to the work outlined in the Chicago Continuum of Care's Youth [Blueprint](#) and [Youth Strategy](#).

Outcomes

- Qualitative and quantitative definitions of success, measurable goals and anticipated outcomes. (If applicants prefer to address this through an outcomes table vs. a narrative, please affix the outcomes table as an attachment.)