



Catalyzing Innovation on Chicago's South and West Sides

A Better Chicago's Catalyst Fund funnels financial resources and management support to ideas and BIPOC leaders with the potential to dramatically lower levels of poverty on the South and West sides of our city.

Specifically, the Catalyst Fund:

- Identifies and elevates bold, promising ideas and initiatives that are emerging or are already working within prioritized communities
- Catalyzes the generation of new ideas to address persistent challenges
- Develops and supports community embedded BIPOC leaders and organizations to bring those ideas to fruition
- Provides the funding, insight, and management support necessary to accelerate and enhance the effectiveness and scale of these ideas

The Challenge

While Chicago has made dramatic improvement on a number of critical academic metrics in the past 10-15 years, deep disparities remain between low-income students of color and their more affluent peers. The disruptions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic have only exacerbated these gaps. Nowhere is that divide felt more acutely than on the South and West sides of our city.

There is tremendous potential in these neighborhoods, both in students and families and in existing and nascent ideas, leaders, and organizations. Emerging leaders and initiatives can be transformative, both locally and across the city, if they receive the support and resources needed to truly accelerate. These ideas often go overlooked altogether by funders or, if considered, do not stand out as "high-potential" even when they hold the potential to drive meaningful change in our city's most vulnerable communities.



A BETTER CHICAGO



At A Better Chicago, we believe in the great untapped potential on the South and West sides of our city and are excited to play a collaborative role in bringing that potential to light and supporting its growth through our Catalyst fund. A Better Chicago's Catalyst Fund prioritizes:

- **Supporting BIPOC leaders within the community to test, develop, and expand ideas** that will increase the quality of education and access to economic opportunity for students
- **Investing in additional interventions and supports that make a significant long-term impact** on students, whether they be academic (e.g., improving success in core subjects) or non-academic (e.g., addressing issues of trauma)
- **Identifying and supporting new ideas and approaches emerging from the community** that, with additional investment and leadership, support the expansion of long-term opportunity

A Better Chicago's Catalyst Fund proudly supports a diverse set of BIPOC-led organizations serving youth from cradle to career, such as:

- **An organization focused on elevating childcare provider quality** and ensuring that children are ready for kindergarten by creating continuity of learning and practice among childcare (pre-K) providers and elementary schools
- **A youth boxing program that serves as an engaging, meaningful physical outlet** for youth and provides academic coaching and mentorship
- **A violence prevention program that interrupts cycles of violence** by providing young adult men with mentorship, leadership development, and access to skills training and job opportunities

Our Goal

A Better Chicago's Catalyst Fund aims to not only realize transformational impact for South and West side communities and the young people who call them home but also to amplify the impact of a diverse group of leaders already working hard to improve their neighborhoods.



**To learn more,
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