



Design Challenge Grants

BACKGROUND FOR PROSPECTIVE GRANTEES

A Better Chicago has launched the Chicago Design Challenge to accelerate learning recovery, promote wellbeing, and dramatically improve post-pandemic schooling. The goal of the challenge is to identify and scale the city's most promising solutions and innovations to ensure communities and schools are better positioned to provide support, education, and opportunity for all students. The challenge will be fueled by a powerful collaborative effort across sectors with The Chicago Public Education Fund, University of Chicago Education Lab, Chicago Public Schools, and the City of Chicago acting as core partners.

GRANTS OVERVIEW

Serving Chicago's earliest learners through high school youth, the Chicago Design Challenge grants are designed to:

Drive critical academic and social-emotional outcomes...

- Students reading at or above grade level by 3rd grade
- Students making gains in early and middle grades math
- High school success including 9th Grade On-Track and high school graduation
- Age-specific social-emotional learning and development (based on frameworks including [CASEL](#) and [Foundations for Young Adult Success](#))
- Trauma-informed mental health services and supports that can provide broad or targeted benefit to the aforementioned outcomes

...for priority populations...

- Students who are significantly behind grade-level standards
- Students who have had limited to no participation in remote learning
- Students who are transitioning to new school levels
- Students in temporary housing or who have experienced homelessness
- Students who are undocumented
- Students who are English Language Learners
- Students who attend schools in neighborhoods hardest hit by COVID-19

...with effective, efficient, and ambitious partners.

- Programs are innovative, can be improved over time, and can advance intended outcomes
- Leadership teams have the flexibility, potential, and willingness to innovate and excel
- Organizations are financially and operationally sound, data-oriented, and engaged with key partners
- Organizations value the opportunity to make their approaches available to as many young people as possible, with philanthropic and public supports



The challenge will award grants in **two phases** – planning and execution – and will fuel the design, measurement, and implementation of new approaches to supporting students. Program implementation should begin during the 2021-2022 school year.





1. Planning Phase – June to August 2021

2. Execution Phase – September 2021 and beyond

Multi-year investments will be contingent on meeting annual performance milestones, and ongoing data tracking will help grantees reflect and iterate as they implement their new programs.

Selection Guidance

A Better Chicago and its partners sought community input to determine the overall scope of the Chicago Design Challenge, critical outcomes, and priority populations. Community leader input will also inform the overall design and award process. Furthermore, Chicago Design Challenge partners will seek feedback from students, teachers, school leaders, parents, and families throughout the planning and implementation phases of the work. Through the application process and vetting, grant applicants will be reviewed across four criteria:

AREA OF FOCUS	WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR...
<p>Program</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interventions that represent a novel approach to advancing chosen outcomes for selected population(s) • Applicants who show a meaningful understanding of the scope and size of the challenge to be addressed • Applicants that can identify targeted population(s) to serve* • Applicants with an ability to reach those targeted population(s)* • Program designs that acknowledge and embrace anti-racist practices
<p>Leadership</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders and leadership teams who have a demonstrated commitment to anti-racism • Leadership teams willing to make necessary shifts to support proposed interventions • Leadership teams who are committed to data rigor and continuous improvement • Leadership teams and boards who share a commitment to the Chicago Design Challenge and its intended outcomes • Leadership teams with an ability, willingness, and commitment to engage in the Chicago Design Challenge and with Chicago Design Challenge partners
<p>Operations</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants, with support through the Chicago Design Challenge, who have the skills and resources necessary to execute on proposed interventions • Applicants who can track relevant program data to inform continuous improvement and A Better Chicago reporting* • Applicant organizations that are financially sound
<p>Scale</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants who are interested in seeing their work scale to more young people across Chicago • Program designs that have the promise of future scale • Applicants who can document planning and implementation to inform sector learning and future opportunities to scale* • Applicants with an understanding of the economic drivers of proposed interventions

*Denote areas that could be a focus of the design period and might not be solidified during the initial application process