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**NEWS RELEASE
CHICAGO FOUNDATIONS & FUNDERS ANNOUNCE RAPID-RESPONSE GRANT OPPORTUNITY
TO SUPPORT SAFE AND PEACEFUL SUMMER**

5th Year of Strategic, Community-level Grants That Make a Difference on the Ground

CHICAGO – Hundreds of grassroots organizations in Chicago’s South and West Side neighborhoods are gearing up for summer, working to make their communities safer. Community members are planning peace circles, pop-up evening festivals, community garden events, clean-up days, youth activities, sports programs and much more and many will get help from [The Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities](#) (PSPC) and its [Chicago Fund](#).

PSPC is a coalition of more than 40 foundations and funders that are aligning their investments to support proven and promising approaches to reducing gun violence. Its community-focused grantmaking through the Chicago Fund will allocate \$1 million in rapid-response grants, ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000, to support programs and events by small, grassroots organizations that are proactively working to keep Chicago communities hardest hit by gun violence safe. **Grant applications are due February 14, and grant awards will be distributed April 22, 2020.** The application for funding is available at https://cct.smartsimple.com/s_Login.jsp. Organizations can [read the RFP](#) before applying.

“We are excited as we enter the fifth year of supporting and amplifying the efforts of people in neighborhoods most impacted by gun violence to bring residents together, provide secure spaces and create the sense of connectedness needed to make our communities safe,” said Deborah Bennett, senior program officer, Polk Bros. Foundation and member of PSPC.

Last year out of more than 300 organizations that applied, 181 were funded, 179 of which directly served young people, for activities from Memorial Day weekend to mid-autumn. The partnership sees this overwhelming response as demonstrating both the on-going desire of Chicago’s residents to help promote peace, as well as the scope of the unmet funding needs of organizations engaged in violence prevention and community building.

Participants’ reactions over the years drives home the reason the Fund continues to expand the program.

“One of our community quality of life plan goals is to increase safety and security of our residential blocks through beautification and engagement,” wrote a leader of one funded project. “Bringing Morganway Garden back to a place of beauty and a space where a resident can just go, sit quietly and read a book, or a block club or group can host a community engagement event is exactly what we accomplished this summer.”

The groups who get these grants are mostly operated by volunteers. The median operating budget for funded organizations was \$83,000. The Fund will prioritize 21 communities on the South and West Sides.

“Each year we create more and stronger bonds with community residents and also local schools and organizations that align with our mission,” said a leader from Little Village’s Jardincito. “This year, we had a diverse group of coordinators and instructors who added an incredible amount of richness to our programming and community connections. The youth we serve benefit from this in that a safe and supportive environment is created where their voice, their families and the community voice are honored.”

Southside Together Organizing for Power, a group working with young adults who are involved with violence, said its summer program engaged young people, “who are in many ways among those least integrated into our community. We helped them build relationships with each other, their families, and community members. Our primary tool for this was peace circles, spaces where participants can be at once emotionally honest and emotionally safe.”

The South Austin Neighborhood Association sponsored Farm-to-Table Summer events in 2018 and 2019. “As a result of our program, members of the community who previously had little to no interaction, specifically community youth and community seniors, came together to engage in common learning and to promote a common purpose,” wrote one of the group’s leaders. “Our program created a source of community pride that will cause the community to bond more closely together to protect and enhance it.”

Grant applications are due February 14, and grant awards will be distributed April 22, 2020, a month earlier than in the past, giving community groups more time to plan summer and early fall events that strengthen neighborhoods and support peace during months when shootings are usually [at their highest](#).

The Chicago Fund is one of four key strategies of the [Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities](#):

- **Street outreach and transitional jobs;**
- **Police reform and community engagement;**
- **Gun policy reform; and**
- **The Chicago Fund, a rapid-response fund for community-led summer and fall activities**

“We know it takes a combination of intervention strategies working together to reduce gun violence in our city,” said Anna Lee, director of community impact at The Chicago Community Trust and member of PSPC. “We hope to inspire even more community partners to join efforts to promote safety and peace in our communities now that grants will be distributed a full month earlier, allowing more planning time before Memorial Day weekend.”

The Chicago Fund was launched in 2016 in response to a spike in violence that drew national attention to the problem of gun violence in Chicago. In an effort that has attracted resources from an increasing number of funders, the rapid-response fund has provided \$3.3 million in support of 505 projects:

2019: \$1.1 million in support; 181 projects funded

2018: \$850,000 in support; 132 projects funded

2017: \$850,000 in support; 120 projects funded

2016: \$500,000 in support; 72 projects funded

Chicago Fund's 2019 projects included:

- ***The Westside Writing Project's summer workshop in Garfield Park and Austin.*** This series mentored young male students in life skills and conflict resolution while encouraging reflection on how African-American males are portrayed in mainstream media and popular culture, and whether students' own behavior and outlook on life works toward changing or reinforcing that image.
- ***A Humboldt Park Truth and Reconciliation Summit.*** Community leaders — including law enforcement — were given a forum to publicly apologize for causing harm, work through guided meditation sessions and pledge to help implement change.
- ***The Healing Through Art and Nature Project in Little Village.*** Artists and residents were brought together during the summer months to complete art- and nature-related projects in a community garden. Events also included community planting days, a summer solstice observance and a back-to-school celebration.
- ***Peace Circles in the Englewood Community Garden, the Mandrake Park Facility and the 39th Street lakefront in Bonneville.*** Events included music, spoken word, and portrayals, with all ages participating in musical expressions thru use of drums, hand clapping, and singing. Elders and trained trauma specialists served as consultants to promote healing and communal fellowship. Families and Chicago Public School administrators were invited to a candlelight evening culminating event.
- ***"Peace Is the Walk" in New City.*** Mentors were trained and then matched with youth and parents to access nature in the Chicago area, including forest preserves, parks, conservatories and Northerly Island, discovering how nature heals and restores peace, often to what has been experienced as trauma. The experiences of the summer were presented at the neighborhood's Back of the Yards "Back-to-School Festival."

In 2020, the Fund will prioritize 21 community areas on the South and West Sides: Austin, Auburn Gresham, Chatham, Chicago Lawn, Englewood, West Englewood, Gage Park, East Garfield Park, West Garfield Park, Greater Grand Crossing, Humboldt Park, Lower West Side (Pilsen), New City (Back of the Yards), North Lawndale, Roseland, South Chicago, South Lawndale (Little Village), South Shore, Washington Park, West Pullman and Woodlawn.

To qualify, applicants are strongly encouraged, but not required, to propose activities that adhere to the Seven Field Principles model, [an evidence-based framework](#) that has been successful in fostering strong communities and reducing violence. For more information see ["Dr. Carl Bell's Keys to Reducing Violence and Re-Engaging Youth to Society."](#)

About the Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities

The Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities is a coalition of more than 40 Chicago funders and foundations committed to aligning their funding to support proven and promising approaches to reducing gun violence. To date, members have committed nearly \$75 million to street outreach and transitional jobs, police reform and community relations, gun policy reform and a rapid-response fund for community-led summer activities. Learn more at: <http://safeandpeaceful.org>. Learn more about the Chicago Fund at www.safeandpeacefulchi.com.

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