

2025



ANNUAL REPORT

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As we wrap up The Chicago Giving Circle’s (CGC) fourth year of grantmaking, we’re filled with gratitude for this incredible community—and for the collective impact we’ve achieved together.

Since our founding, CGC has granted \$1.4 million to six growth-stage Chicago nonprofits. Just as meaningful as the funding itself has been the engagement and generosity of our members—who have offered their expertise, networks, and time to help our grantee partners grow and thrive.

In 2025, we were thrilled to welcome six new families to the Circle, bringing our community to 22 families and members. Throughout the year, members gathered for quarterly meetings to guide our grantmaking, volunteered alongside nonprofit partners, took part in learning opportunities that deepened our understanding of Chicago’s most pressing challenges, and came together for a joyful summer celebration.

To our members and grantee partners—thank you. Your commitment, insight, and passion continue to inspire us every day. Together, we are building not only a stronger network of changemakers but a more equitable and connected Chicago.

Julie Hoffmann
Executive Director

Hannah Kaplan
Program Officer

The Chicago Giving Circle is a group of service-oriented individuals and families pooling their philanthropic resources to make meaningful contributions to Chicago-area nonprofits.

Mission

To accelerate the impact of promising growth-stage Chicago-area nonprofits.

Vision

To help Chicago flourish by giving back to the city that has given us so much and has so much to offer.

Values

Seeking to understand and support the needs of our nonprofit partners and those they serve with multi-year grants and, when appropriate, our time.



Grantmaking Philosophy & Model

Strategic

We invest intentionally to address key community needs and drive measurable impact.

Entrepreneurial

We partner with members and grantees to learn, share, and maximize our collective results.

Collaborative

We explore new ideas, learn from our partners, and adapt to meet evolving community needs.

CGC funding is...

Targeted

- Focus on startup and emerging organizations, or innovative programs within established organizations
- Open to taking on some risk to support nonprofits in trying something new or innovative

Nonprofit-Centered

- Acknowledge and work to break down the power imbalance between the group and prospective grantees
- Build relationships where nonprofits feel comfortable and are encouraged to be transparent about their challenges
- Work to satisfy the genuine needs of prospective grantees and those they serve
- Collaborate with prospective grantees to determine what funding is most needed

Transparent

- Openly share grantmaking priorities, deadlines, and decision dates and remain accessible throughout the grantmaking process and beyond

Multi-Year & Conditional

- Provide three-year grants, contingent upon grantees meeting annual, agreed upon goals

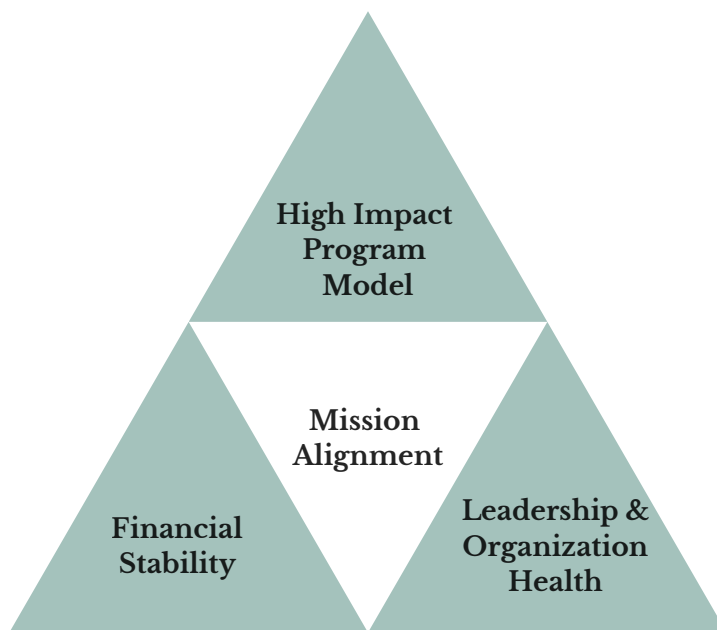
Grantmaking Process

Annual Grantmaking Process & Calendar

Q1	Jan - March	Determine Impact Area & Initial Sourcing
Q2	April - May	Diligence: Vetting, Applications, and Evaluation
Q3	June - Sept	Grant Selection & Award Finalization
Q4	Oct - Dec	Learning & Reflection

Due Diligence

We focus on **four core competencies** when conducting diligence on potential grantees.



2025 Grantmaking

Impact Area: Food Insecurity

At the beginning of each grant cycle, CGC members agree upon an impact area of focus for that cycle. This focus area then serves as the "theme" for the year, meaning the grantee(s) selected, as well as any engagement or learning opportunities, will relate to that focus area.

Sourced 40+ food insecurity and food access organizations

Determined 25 organizations best aligned with grantmaking priorities

Solicited applications from 5 organizations

Conducted site visits with 2 finalists

Selected 1 grantees

2025 Grantee:

Growing Home received a grant of \$300,000 over three years (2025-2027).

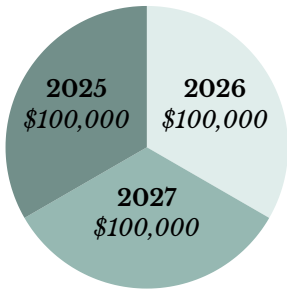


GROWING HOME



TOTAL GRANT

\$300,000



IMPACT AREA

Food Insecurity

LEADERSHIP

Janelle St. John
Executive Director

Melinda Craigs-Ingram
Director of Operations
and External Affairs

Ezra Lee
Director of Urban Farm

YEAR
FOUNDED
1992

Overview

Founded in 2002, Growing Home is Chicago’s first and only USDA-certified organic urban farm, using organic agriculture as a tool for job training, food access, and community development. Based in Englewood, it provides paid transitional employment, career readiness training, and wraparound support for residents overcoming barriers such as unemployment, justice involvement, or housing instability.

Growing Home’s mission is simple and bold: “Everyone deserves access to a good job and good food.”



2025 Recap

This year, Growing Home’s Englewood Urban Farm harvested 31,000 pounds of organic produce—projected to reach 35,000 pounds by year-end—despite a challenging growing season.

Through seasonal fluctuations and broader SNAP challenges, Growing Home remained a consistent resource—adapting operations while maintaining stability for both employees and residents.

2025 Highlights

- **Englewood Home Delivery Program:** Concluded a successful sixth season, bringing fresh produce directly to local residents, primarily homebound seniors with mobility challenges.
- **Markets & Access:** Continued Link Match discounts at markets and weekly pantry deliveries, providing healthy food at up to 75% reduced cost and no cost through strategic partnerships.
- **Employment Training:** Final cohort of 2025 graduates on Nov. 14, with several participants already placed in full-time jobs.
- **Community Engagement:** Led several community-friendly events, including Juneteenth Celebration, Growing Home’s Backyard Barbecue, and Harvestfest in collaboration with Open House Chicago. Growing Home will also participate in Winterfest alongside several valued community partners.



Growing Home - Philanthropy Brief

Leadership & Innovation

Under Executive Director Janelle St. John—recipient of the Chicago Bulls’ MLK Legacy Award—Growing Home has grown into a citywide model for urban farming.

The organization offers two main training tracks:

- **12-week Paid Employment Training Program**, blending on-the-job experience with classroom instruction.
- **10-week IT Certification Program**, preparing participants for CompTIA A+ and Security+ credentials.

In 2024–25, **148 trainees** participated, achieving a **45% job placement rate** and **95% retention** after 30 days. Graduates secured jobs in healthcare, logistics, IT, and manufacturing, often through long-standing employer partners like the CTA, FedEx, and Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Looking Ahead

2026 will mark an exciting new phase for Growing Home. Years of careful planning and consideration will begin to take shape as the organization breaks ground on the Wood Street Campus Expansion which adds growing capacity, educational opportunity, and increased food access measures to the urban farm site.

CGC Partnership

As a new CGC grantee in 2025, Growing Home exemplifies innovation rooted in community. CGC’s investment is strengthening core infrastructure and enabling:

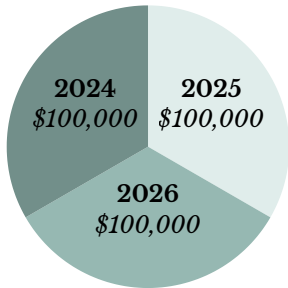
- Expansion of Workforce Training cohorts.
- Transportation and technology support for job placement.
- Sustained food access equity, keeping produce affordable through Link Match and continued partnerships to local pantries
- Capacity-building for the Wood Street Farm Expansion, part of the \$25M Capital Campaign supported by a \$5M City of Chicago grant.

The partnership has also opened new opportunities for volunteer engagement—from farm harvests and weeding, to mock interviews—creating direct connections between CGC members and Englewood residents.



TOTAL GRANT

\$300,000



IMPACT AREA

Youth Development
& Crime Prevention

LEADERSHIP

Jamyle Cannon
Executive Director

Carla Arias-Chavez
Director of Operations

YEAR
FOUNDED

2016

About

Founded in 2016 by former teacher and National Collegiate Boxing Champion Jamyle Cannon, The Bloc channels the discipline and community of boxing into youth development on Chicago's West Side. The organization engages young people—especially those least likely to participate in traditional mentoring or tutoring—through boxing, academic support, and mentoring. Families benefit from community engagement and a robust food distribution program, ensuring holistic support for youth and their households.

2025 Recap

In 2025, The Bloc expanded its reach and deepened its community impact. The organization now operates programs across multiple schools and nonprofits—including KIPP One Academy, Piccolo Elementary, Kelvyn Park High School, Clemente, and Breakthrough—with plans to reach ten sites by 2026.



2025 Highlights

- Launch of the **Alpha's Program for girls**, providing mentorship and leadership training.
- Completion of **major facility renovations**, including a restructured gym and new locker rooms, increasing training capacity.
- A new **partnership with Dion's Chicago Dream**, providing 150 boxes of fresh produce twice a month to Humboldt Park families.
- Collaboration with **Breakthrough** to offer a 10-week youth boxing program and leadership event.
- Continued success in competition—one of The Bloc's fighters won his weight class in the **Chicago Golden Gloves**.
- **New Bloc Fit program**, employing alumni to lead community fitness classes.

CGC Support

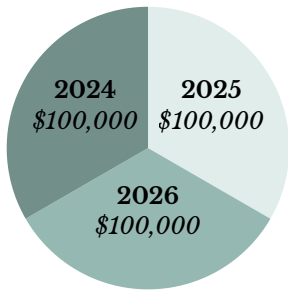
The Chicago Giving Circle's investment continues to be impactful—fueling expansion, facility upgrades, and innovative programs. CGC supported The Bloc in launching new wellness initiatives, strengthening operational infrastructure, and expanding programming to additional schools.

Beyond funding, CGC members have contributed directly through strategic guidance in curriculum development and marketing.



TOTAL GRANT

\$300,000



IMPACT AREA

Youth Development
& Crime Prevention

LEADERSHIP

Yolanda Fields
Executive Director

Alexandra Cesario
Chief Development
Officer

YEAR FOUNDED

1992

Overview

Founded in 1992, **Breakthrough** is a faith-based nonprofit rooted in Chicago's Garfield Park community. The organization provides housing, workforce development, behavioral health, youth programs, violence prevention, and wellness initiatives to over **20,000 residents annually**.

The **Breakthrough Beyond** program—supported by CGC—serves youth ages **14–24** who are reengaging with education and building pathways to employment and college. The program offers mentoring, academic support, and wraparound care that meet youth where they are.

2025 Recap

FY25 was a year of progress and visibility for Breakthrough. The organization expanded programs while strengthening long-term infrastructure and workforce pipelines.

Breakthrough's leadership has been recognized for innovation in community-driven violence prevention and holistic youth support.



2025 Highlights

- Launch of a **high school professional development track**, supporting youth with mentorship and career training.
- **Annual Trunk Party** and scholarship programming served over 80 students heading to college.
- Launch of a new **data infrastructure** system to better track outcomes.
- New **partnership with The Bloc**, a 10-week boxing and leadership program.
- Violence Prevention program reported a **26% reduction** in gun violence victimizations in East Garfield Park, continuing its national recognition.

CGC Support

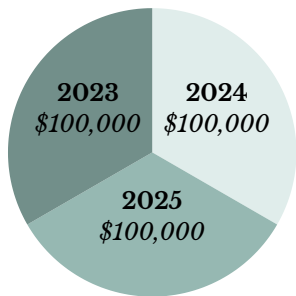
CGC's multi-year support was vital in sustaining Breakthrough Beyond during periods of transition. The grant helped maintain continuity of programming, strengthen postsecondary pathways, and stabilize services when other funding shifted.

In 2025, CGC members continued to serve as key thought partners in program design, trades workforce development, and long-term financial strategy, positioning Breakthrough for long-term sustainability.

Chicago HOPES for Kids - Philanthropy Brief



**TOTAL
GRANT**
\$300,000



IMPACT AREA

Family Services

LEADERSHIP

Rita Kahn
Executive Director

Dajuan King
Program Director

**YEAR
FOUNDED**
2006

Overview

Founded in 2006 in partnership with AmeriCorps VISTA, Chicago HOPES for Kids provides cost-free, high-quality afterschool and family engagement programs for children experiencing homelessness or housing instability. Its trauma-informed approach combines literacy development, enrichment activities, and family workshops that foster academic confidence and community connection.

HOPES' signature Parent Partners Program, empowers parents through workshops on self-care, goal setting, and advocacy—helping families strengthen stability and support their children's learning.

2025 Recap

In 2025, Chicago HOPES continued to expand its reach and strengthen its programs across shelters and transitional housing sites, serving hundreds of students and families across the city.

CGC Support

The Chicago Giving Circle's partnership has been instrumental in sustaining HOPES' family engagement, enrichment programs, and literacy initiatives. CGC members have volunteered at family events and provided strategic advice on Salesforce database negotiations, helping guide decisions between Salesforce and Apricot systems.

2025 Highlights

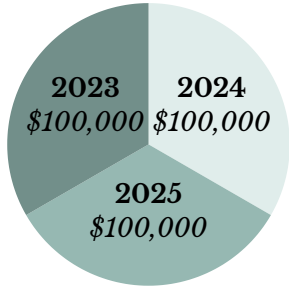
- **Staffing Model Restructure:** Beginning Fall 2025, Program Managers will oversee both **Ready Readers (K–5)** and **Literacy Leaders (grades 6–9)** at assigned sites. This integrated model will build stronger relationships with families, improve continuity, and ensure smooth student transitions between programs.
- **Partnership Success:** Collaborations with **Habitat for Humanity** at Long Grove House and the **Smith School literacy pilot** have deepened consistency in academic progress and engagement.
- **Community Events:** The annual **“HOPES in the Habitat” day at Lincoln Park Zoo**—featured on the front page of the Chicago Tribune—welcomed more than 400 families and alumni, celebrating the power of learning and community.
- **Advocacy & Visibility:** Following the temporary AmeriCorps funding cuts, HOPES leadership appeared in multiple local news segments, advocating for program restoration. Their efforts contributed to a successful **court-ordered reinstatement of the 2024–2025 Illinois Serve AmeriCorps grant**—a major win for continuity of service and staff stability.

The Dovetail Project - Philanthropy Brief



TOTAL GRANT

\$300,000



IMPACT AREA

Family Services

LEADERSHIP

Sheldon Smith
Founder & Executive
Director

Vernon Owens
Director of Programs

YEAR
FOUNDED

2009

About Dovetail Project

Founded in 2009 by Sheldon Smith, The Dovetail Project equips young Black and Brown fathers—ages 17–24—with the parenting, life, and legal knowledge they need to strengthen their families and communities. Participants complete a **12-week curriculum** covering *Parenting Skills*, *Life Skills*, and *Felony Street Law*, followed by 24 months of individualized case management, a stipend, and access to a lifelong support network.

Now recognized nationally as a **fatherhood intervention organization**, Dovetail provides wraparound support to **fathers of all ages** through holistic, evidence-based programs that strengthen family stability, economic mobility, and community safety.

2025 Recap

This year marked the **culmination of Dovetail’s 2023–2025 Strategic Plan**, a transformative period that strengthened its infrastructure, deepened programming, and positioned the organization as a national model for fatherhood engagement.

CGC Support

CGC’s multi-year partnership has strengthened Dovetail’s digital systems, facility planning, and program expansion. Strategic guidance from CGC members has supported new DFHI pilots and employment pathways for both young and older fathers.

2025 Highlights

- **Digital Transformation:** Launched a new **digital hub for fatherhood**, powered by an AI-driven Salesforce dashboard, delivering data-driven functionality, and expanding Dovetail’s reach by 500%.
- **Fatherhood Centered Programming:**
 - **Fatherhood Education Program** for Dads 17-24
 - **Fatherhood Relief Fund** for essential household support
 - **Dovetail Family Health Initiative**
 - **Paternal Health Initiative** for new and expectant fathers
 - **Healthy Navigation Initiative** for fathers 25+ connecting them to a network of resources
- **Research and Evaluation:** Strengthened data and policy infrastructure.
- **Capital Growth:** Secured **\$450,000** toward its permanent headquarters - “A Place Called Home” that will house all programs.

“We are deeply grateful for your steadfast partnership... transforming families and strengthening communities every day.”

— Sheldon Smith

Thank You to Our Members

The Chicago Giving Circle is fueled by the generosity of its members. Without each of you, we would not be able to partner with and invest in such critical Chicago nonprofits. Thank you for your commitment to Chicago.

Heidi & Craig Albert
Jon & Ellenna Berger
Andrew & Kate Bluestein
Dan & Lori Jean Dal Degan
Amy & Brian Hand
Dorothy & Seth Hemming
George Houlihan & Joyce Winnecke
Tim & Jennifer Huelskamp
Eric & Kara Meizlish
Scott Moller
Bryan & Kyle Netzly
Christine & Tim Nicodemus
Paul Rand & Diane Rodriguez Rand
Bill Reedy
Jeff, Lisa, and Ben Rosenkranz
Mark & Tricia Rothschild
Michael Schnur & Janice Liten
Erik Severinghaus & Dana Popish Severinghaus
Jim Streibich & Lisa Carrel
Ryan Streibich
Haley & Lawrence Tanzman
Mark, Creed, and Sam Woodka

CGC Fund Summary

Actuals as of November, 2025

Revenue	
Contributions	\$525,541.75
Investment Earnings	\$3,938.00
Prior Year Rollover	\$32,361.85
Total Revenue	\$561,841.60
Expenses	
Grant Payments	\$500,000.00
Program Management	\$50,000.00
Administrative Fees*	\$5,000.00
Total Expenses	\$555,000.00
Surplus	\$6,841.60

*Chicago Giving Circle is a Donor Advised Fund held at The Chicago Community Trust.



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To learn more about The Chicago Giving Circle, visit:
www.chicagogivingcircle.com