



Alliance for Research with Chicagoland Communities/ Northwestern University Clinical & Translational Sciences Institute

Announcing ARCC 2025-Cycle 1 Seed Grants

8 Grants to Support Community Research Capacity-Building
& Collaboration to Improve Health Equity

The Alliance for Research with Chicagoland Communities ([ARCC](#))/Northwestern University Clinical & Translational Sciences Institute (NUCATS), in partnership with Northwestern Memorial Hospital (NMH), announce the recipients of seed grants that support the development of community leaders and community-driven partnerships to improve health equity. ARCC believes that using the tools of science to achieve health equity can best be done when it honors & centers the leadership of communities as local, cultural, practice, lived experience experts. In this is the 1st cycle of Seed Grants in ARCC's eighteenth round of seed grant funding, ARCC awarded 8 grants totalling \$39,000.

- **Community Research Capacity-Building Grants:** each \$3000 award supports a Chicagoland community organization for 6 months to build community research capacity. Activities may include assessment; training; and/or the development of research infrastructure, priorities, or future research collaborations. **5 funded in Cycle 1**
- **Partnership Development Grants:** each \$8,000 award supports a partnership that includes a community lead from a Chicagoland community organization and an academic lead from Northwestern for a 12-month project. Grants support newly developing partnerships in relationship building, creation of partnership structure, exploration of shared areas of interest, and research capacity development. Priority was given to applications that focus on racial equity and addressing root causes of inequities. **3 funded in Cycle 1**

A list and brief summary of the focus of each Seed Grantee funded in this cycle is included below. Over our full 17 years of seed grant funding, ARCC has distributed almost \$2 million to almost 150 community organizations and community-academic partnerships. The funded partnerships have led to increased community and academic capacity for engagement and research, new health improvements and policy changes, over \$42 million in subsequent grant funding, and 47 peer-reviewed publications. Grants are supported by funds from the Northwestern University Clinical & Translational Sciences ([NUCATS](#)) Institute and Northwestern Memorial Hospital ([NMH](#)).

[Request for applications](#) for a second cycle of 2025 ARCC Seed Grants to support additional Community Research Capacity-Building grants, Partnership Development grants, and Research Pilot Seed Grants are open now. Applications for this cycle are due April 22, 2025.

Community Research Capacity-Building Grant Summaries

CQLC for Latine Transformative Research. Emily Jade Aguilar, [Chicago Queer Latine Collaborative](#) (CQLC) NFP

The Chicago Queer Latine Collaborative (CQLC) seeks to build transformative research leadership within Chicago's Latine LGBTQ+ communities, with a focus on expanding the inclusion of transgender and gender-diverse (TGD) health professionals. This project will identify and engage local Latine TGD health professionals to provide research training and capacity-building resources tailored to their needs. Our aim is to strengthen their ability to lead community-driven health research addressing root causes of health inequities affecting Latine TGD populations. Through this work, we will enhance the capacity of CQLC to foster inclusive and innovative research collaborations, prioritize equity-focused research agendas, and

develop a pipeline of TGD leaders equipped to drive meaningful change. This initiative focuses on Chicago's Latine LGBTQ+ communities, particularly in the city's West, Near West, and Southwest neighborhoods. By empowering TGD professionals, we aim to expand health equity and amplify community-driven solutions.

Where my girls at? Exploring Black girls' knowledge, availability, and access to mental wellness resources in their communities. Brittney Autry, [Cent\(HER\)ed Collective Girls, NFP](#)

Cent(HER)ed Collective Girls, NFP was founded in 2020 to address the challenge of providing wellness opportunities for Black girls. In 2023, Cent(HER)ed Collective Girls, NFP partnered with two high schools (Noble-Rauner College Prep and Noble-Chicago Bulls Prep) to offer wellness programming during the school day, serving over 20 young, Black girls. As we continue in that work, we seek to understand more intimately the gaps in mental health knowledge that exist in resources and determine best practices for addressing these challenges. Research suggests that there is a dearth of knowledge with respect to the overall well-being of this underserved population. Between 1991 and 2017, suicide attempts by Black youth increased, while suicide attempts among youth across other races and ethnicities decreased. Actual suicide death rates for Black girls ages 13 to 19 increased by 182% from 2001 to 2017. Because of these grave statistics within the age demographic we serve, the proposed project is designed to gather information on the mental well-being of community members within the south and west sides of Chicago in which our participants live. We aim to develop a study to understand the unique needs of our girls, their communities and what resources we may be able to provide in the future to fill the existing voids. In anticipation of executing a participatory action research design, we plan to utilize this grant opportunity to train the roughly 24 girls we currently work with in foundational qualitative research design. We aim to support them in understanding the purpose of conducting research, develop interesting and insightful questions and data gathering methods and explore different ways in which research can be beneficial in determining gaps in their respective communities. We will partner with a research consultant from the University of Illinois at Chicago who will provide a fundamental qualitative training program to our girls after school. We will purchase materials on qualitative research design and utilize interactive videos to develop the training program for high school aged girls. We anticipate that we will need to have about two sessions per month throughout the duration of the study to ensure that the girls are able to understand the material, ask questions and explore ways in which they may already be doing their own forms of research. Each of our girls will be taught about the importance of research, what qualitative research is and key components of participatory research design.

Bridging the Gap: A Heal TogetHER Initiative Using Focus Groups to Promote Mental Wellness Among Black Women in Chicago. Camesha Jones-Brandon, [Sista Afya Community Care NFP](#)

Sista Afya Community Care (SACC) seeks to expand our research capacity to address mental health inequities among Black women in underserved neighborhoods of Chicago through the "Heal TogetHER" initiative. By centering the lived experiences of Black women, SACC advances culturally relevant mental health solutions that challenge systemic inequities. Funding will support SACC's efforts to adapt and evaluate Heal TogetHER, a peer-supported mental health model, to meet the unique needs of Black women. SACC will convene focus groups to identify community priorities, recruit and train Black women as Community Health Workers, and co-develop a culturally affirming approach to peer-based mental health support. By centering lived experiences and fostering community ownership, this project will empower Black women, reduce barriers to care, and create sustainable solutions. The grant will enable

SACC to lay the foundation for research collaborations and advocacy efforts that promote mental wellness and health equity for Black women.

Empowering Communities for Maternal Health Equity: Building Research Capacity Through Training, Collaboration, and Community

Maryam Muhammad, [Heal Thy Life Center](#)

Maternal mortality rates are rising on Chicago's Southside, with Black women facing a significantly higher risk than their white counterparts. To address this urgent crisis, with ARCC's funds, Heal Thy Life Center will develop the research infrastructure needed to empower the Southside of Chicago underserved communities to take an active role in addressing maternal health disparities. This approach empowers local women and families to lead vital research on maternal health, nutrition, and food security. This pilot will equip community members to conduct listening sessions, collect data, and collaboratively identify health priorities, ensuring that solutions are shaped by their voices and experiences. Maternal health research is crucial in these underserved areas, where many mothers face barriers to accessing nutritious food, healthcare, and culturally relevant health education. Traditional research often overlooks these unique challenges, failing to reflect the cultural practices and lived experiences essential for effective solutions. This is more than research, it's a step toward health equity and safer futures for Black mothers.

Girls in the Game: Research with Purpose, Jess Larson, [Girls in the Game](#)

Girls in the Game provides sports, health, and leadership programs to girls 7-18 across Chicago, predominantly for girls of color. In recent years, the organization has seen an increase in outreach from researchers interested in working with the population we serve. After participating in a few studies, the organization requests funds to develop a research purpose and framework that will guide Girls in the Game's community research in the future. There is a large gender gap in research funding, and even less information on how much funding goes toward girls, especially girls of color, under 18. One of our 2024-26 Strategic Plan priorities is to "Amplify the voices of girls", and we believe building a research purpose framework in partnership with program alumni will help us better work with researchers to achieve that goal with a framework that centers gender and racial equity.

Partnership Development Grant Summaries

Building Capacity for a Community Based Research Partnership for LGBTQ Health and Wellbeing

Joli Robinson, [Center on Halsted](#), and [alithia zamantakis](#), Medical Social Sciences, Feinberg School of Medicine

The Center on Halsted and its South Side-based location, the Center on Cottage Grove, seek to expand their leadership and advisory board's capacity for community-engaged research with Northwestern University's Institute for Sexual and Gender Minority Health and Wellbeing (ISGMH). The Center on Cottage Grove is a newly opened space in Woodlawn that is designed to be an anchor for a network that will deliver innovative, community-specific outreach intended to reduce stigma among local BIPOC LGTQ populations. The Center on Halsted, in partnership with five Black/Latine-led organizations (Affinity, ALMA Chicago, Chicago Gay Black Men's Caucus, TaskForce Chicago, and TPAN) aim for the Center on Cottage Grove to connect those most vulnerable to peer-to-peer education, non-clinical testing, wellness resources, and affirming community events. However, what these resources and community partnerships will look like

is not yet established. In partnership with Dr. alithia zamantakis at ISGMH, we aim to 1) foster an equitable academic-community partnership for community engaged research and evaluation; 2) identify the needs of Woodlawn community members to identify resources, interventions, and strategies needed to target social determinants of health (including stigma) within the community; and 3) increase the Center’s leadership and advisory board’s capacity to engage in human-centered research, evaluation, and implementation.

Addressing Lung Cancer Disparities for the Latinx Community on Chicago’s South and West Sides

Erika Flores, [Erie Neighborhood House](#), and [Marquita Lewis](#), Medical Social Sciences, Feinberg School of Medicine

Erie Neighborhood House is dedicated to empowering Chicago's Latinx and immigrant community through education, access to critical services, and advocacy. Erie Neighborhood House recognizes that Latinx individuals are 17% less likely to receive an early or timely lung cancer diagnosis and 30% less likely to receive lung cancer treatment than white individuals. Additionally, many families that Erie Neighborhood House serves have inadequate access to lung cancer care education and care resources. Likewise, Northwestern University’s Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center recognizes a gap in their connection with Latinx communities regarding lung cancer control. Thus, Erie Neighborhood House aims to deepen a research partnership with the Lurie Cancer Center that sheds light on disparities in lung cancer diagnosis and care within the South- and West-side Chicago communities they serve.

Building a Community Advisory Board to Address Vicarious Trauma and Burnout Among Advocates Against Gender-based Violence

Colleen Norton, [The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence](#), and Maia Jacobs, Computer Science, McCormick School of Engineering

“Advocates” serve an essential role in addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in Chicagoland communities by providing healthcare, housing, legal advocacy, and other essential services for survivors. Given the challenging nature of their work, advocates are at high risk of experiencing vicarious trauma (VT), which often leads to burnout, turnover, and loss of essential services. The Network: Advocating Against Domestic Violence is a membership organization that unites advocates from more than 40 agencies throughout Chicagoland to enhance community-driven support for survivors. Through a shared interest in addressing advocate VT/burnout, The Network and researchers from Northwestern University aim to develop a community advisory board (CAB) of diverse advocates. The CAB will strengthen the partnership’s capacity to achieve our mutual goals of designing a scalable intervention for VT/burnout and developing strategies to sustainably and ethically implement and evaluate the intervention. As advocates often share the racial/ethnic identities of the survivors they serve, intersectional approaches, advocates’ lived experiences, and community-based values are centered throughout the partnership, process, and intervention.

ARCC Background

Established in 2008, the Alliance for Research with Chicagoland Communities’ (ARCC) mission is to catalyze and support research partnerships driven by and rooted in Chicagoland communities’ unique assets and experiences to achieve health justice. We support authentic community-academic research partnerships between



Chicagoland communities and Northwestern University by providing partnership facilitation, capacity-building resources and technical assistance, seed grants, and advocacy for supportive structural and institutional systems and policies in the research enterprise that center community leadership. ARCC is guided by our [Community-Academic Steering Committee](#) comprised of community-and faith-based organizations, public agencies, and Northwestern faculty and staff. ARCC is a program of the [Center for Community Health](#) serving Northwestern's Institute for Public Health and Medicine ([IPHAM](#)) and the Northwestern University Clinical and Translational Science ([NUCATS](#)) Institute.

For more information, www.ARCCOnline.net or ARCC@northwestern.edu