



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

Announcing ARCC 2024-Cycle 2 Seed Grants

19 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 expertise of communities as local, cultural, practice, lived experience experts. In this is the 2nd cycle of Seed Grants in ARCC's seventeenth round of seed grant funding, ARCC awarded 19 grants totalling \$185,000.

- **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. **11 funded in Cycle 2**
- **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. **4 funded in Cycle 2**
- **Research Pilot Grants:** Each \$30,000 grant supports a partnership that includes a community lead from a community organization and an academic lead from Northwestern for a 2-year project. Research Pilots advance the work of existing partnerships with prior collaborative experience to collect and analyze data and conduct other research activities together. Priority was given to applications that focus on racial equity and addressing root causes of inequities. **4 funded in Cycle 2**

A list and brief summary of the focus of each Seed Grantee funded in this cycle is include below. To see the 7 seed grants funded in Cycle 1 earlier this year, visit [here](#). Across both cycles for this year, ARCC received the most applications and funded the most awards since the seed grant program began! In 2024/Round 17, we funded 26 grants for a total of \$221,000. Over our full 17 years of seed grant funding, ARCC has distributed over \$1.75 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 \$40 million in subsequent grant funding, and 46 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 the 2025/Round 18 ARCC Seed Grants to support Community Research Capacity-Building grants, Partnership Development grants, and Research Pilot Seed Grants will open in fall 2024. Details will be posted [here](#).

Community Research Capacity-Building Grant Summaries

Beyond the Gift Card Community Conversations, Ede Crittle, [Healthy Communities Coalition, Inc.](#)

Our proposed capacity-building initiative, the Beyond the Gift Card Community Conversation Series, aims to bridge gaps between research and communities. Through community-hosted, transparent conversations, we seek to mitigate the negative connotations associated with research and empower community and

faith-based leaders. Our focus, informed by a pilot study on Chicago's Southside and ongoing needs assessment among CBOs and FBOs, centers on bridging the gap between academia and grassroots organizations. Through our four pillars—research and program design, research and evaluation, research and data, and community-driven research—we aim to showcase how research can enhance program delivery, prepare community organizations to deepen their impact, attract funding, and participate equitably in research partnerships. By highlighting real-world examples and providing practical insights, our series will enable community partners to maximize the role and value of research in their initiatives. This initiative partners with diverse researchers, universities, organizations and other stakeholders.

All the Same Girl: Using Research to Create Cultural Competency in Latinx Girl Serving Programs. Kelly Fair, [Polished Pebbles](#)

Polished Pebbles seeks support to plan for and prepare to partner with an academic researcher to complete original research that will inform how we plan, implement, and evaluate our programming for Latina girls. The specific research topic we need to study is best practices for providing Social Emotional learning, career readiness, and youth development programming for working class/low-income urban Latina girls, including recent immigrants and migrants, in the context of our existing programs and practices. Activities will include conducting an initial literature review, an organizational assessment of needs in the context of participating in a formal research project, identify potential academic research partners, and research and design an initial research scope. This project will focus on communities hosting the schools that we engage with high Latinx student populations (more than 15%), including schools on Chicago southside, North Side (Uptown area), South Suburbs, and Maywood/Proviso School District.

Girls Like Me Project's Quest to Establish Advisory Council that Positions Black Girls as Expert Partners in Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR). La'Keisha Gray-Sewell, [Girls Like Me Project](#)

Girls Like Me Project seeks to establish an all-girls advisory council so that the girls we serve may contribute to community-based partnership research as theorists and experts of their lived experiences and the subsequent challenges they face living in Chicago. Through a facilitated workshop, this advisory group of Black girls ages 13-18 would be introduced to concepts and skills that spark their curiosity, foster critical thinking, and ignite their activism to help develop the direction and participation of research that ultimately helps to identify interventions that address the issues Black girls face. By establishing this advisory group, our organization will have direct girls' feedback and insight as we move toward our initial CBPR project.

Coalition on Urban Girls Revitalization Initiative. Ayeshia Garrett-Johnson, [Coalition on Urban Girls](#) (CUG)

The Coalition on Urban Girls (CUG) supports organizations serving girls in Chicago through research, advocacy, and collaboration. Initially formed in 2010 as the South Side Coalition on Urban Girls (SSCUG), the Coalition transitioned to CUG in 2018 with a citywide aim to advance gender equity and enhance girls' health, safety, and well-being. CUG seeks to enhance our capacity-building efforts by establishing a research hub dedicated to urban girls. This initiative aims to deepen the understanding of the unique challenges and needs of girls in the Chicagoland area by strengthening strategic partnerships between community and academic entities. CUG's project will facilitate the creation of a comprehensive database cataloging local research, advocacy, and policy efforts, which will serve as a critical resource for stakeholders. The project will result in a robust research hub that consolidates existing information and identifies gaps in knowledge and advocacy. This hub will empower urban girls by involving them in research processes and provide stakeholders with vital data to shape effective policies and programs. By aligning research efforts and fostering collaboration among a wide array of partners, CUG aims to amplify

its impact on improving the health, safety, and well-being of girls in Chicago, driving systemic change toward greater equity and justice.

Girls Inc. of Chicago addresses the State of Girls on the Southside. Lona Slaughter, [Girls Inc. of Chicago](#)

Girls Inc. of Chicago serves girls of color from disinvested communities across Chicago's South Side including the Grand Crossing, New City, Pullman, Roseland, and Riverdale neighborhoods. Our mission is to inspire all girls to be strong (healthy), smart (educated), and bold (independent) through our school-based and out-of-school-time programs. We are seeking an ARCC capacity building grant to enhance our organization's data collection and administration capabilities. In alignment with our organization's board-approved three-year strategic plan, our ability to understand our impact and make data informed decisions will enhance our ability to attract funding, enhance our credibility, and empower our team to institute practices that maximize our capacity to provide high-quality programming. Additionally, we want to optimize our allocation of resources and reduce inefficiencies to maximize our impact among the vulnerable communities we serve.

Project Yaku Community Research Capacity-Building. Edith Freeze, [Pachacamak Foundation](#)

The Pachacamak Foundation, through its Project Yaku Initiative, aims to build capacity in preparation for future research collaboration within communities affected by microplastic pollution along Chicago Beaches and neighboring areas. This initiative seeks to empower individuals to advocate for environmental protection and community engagement, fostering resilience and promoting the health and well-being of current and future generations. By building the Pachacamak Foundation's capacity for future research partnerships, the Foundation aims to deepen understanding of the intersection between microplastic pollution, human health, and community well-being. Through collaborative efforts, the initiative aims to inform interventions and policies that address the root causes of health inequities and social determinants of health, creating a healthier and more sustainable environment for all.

Recovery and Functional Medicine. Lilia Shrayfer, [Above And Beyond Family Recovery Center](#)

Above and Beyond Family Recovery Center will use its SEED Grant to prepare our current structures for further research design and implementation. Two-thirds of grant funds will support collaboration with our existing partners at Northwestern on qualitative analysis of our previous research in our garden. This will enable the publication of a paper demonstrating the impacts of a narrative therapy technique called PHOTOVOICE on recovery. One-third of grant funds will support capacity-building activities like literature review and knowledge sharing between our Research Statistician and Alumni Relations Counselor in preparation to apply for Research Pilot Funds. The team will begin to identify evidence-based criteria with which to measure long term recovery outcomes, either with a focus on patients who were a part of our initial study or perhaps the general alumni population to be determined during the SEED grant timeline. We hope to plant the seeds to be able to identify best practices for re-engaging alumni into the community so as to best meet their needs and support long-term positive health outcomes.

A Partnership for Healing and Hope on Chicago's South Side. Shelli Strickland, African Lotus Wellness

The proposed capacity-building we are seeking through this funding opportunity will focus on partnership development activities between African Lotus Wellness (ALW) and faculty at Northwestern University (NU -David Victorson, PhD). Specifically, to support future community engaged research pursuits involving human subjects, ALW will engage in training in human subjects research through the online CITI training

program. ALW and NU team members will develop a memorandum of understanding to help guide their working relationship as community/academic partners. Finally, a centerpiece of this proposal will be to co-write a narrative review article that delves into the impacts of yoga and other mind-body practices on the health and wellness of individuals affected by trauma and gun violence in urban settings. This will help ALW identify best practices and current gaps that their programming can address.

Develop Behavioral Health Integration Program in Chinese Community. Chunping Huang, [Chinese American Service League](#)

The Chinese American Service League (CASL) is a not-for-profit comprehensive social service agency serving Chinese immigrants and Americans of racially deprived groups in the Greater Chicago area for 45 years. Department of Behavioral Health and Clinical Services (BHCS) was established in late 2019, with aim to provide culturally and linguistically competent behavioral health and clinical services to the clients to de-stigmatize mental health in the community, to increase access to prevention, intervention and recovery of using trauma-informed care lens. We are proposing to have this capacity building grant to help us understand how Behavioral Health Integration (BHI) may help with alleviating the social determinants of health needs (SDoH) barriers that clients from BHCS are facing and how we can utilize BHI model to better help with de-stigmatization of the mental health in the community through awareness, education and collaborative care.

Rapport Building through Runs/Walks with Researcher. Jackie Hoffman, [Peace Runners 773](#)

Peace Runners 773 is a non-profit organization whose engine is community. In 2020, founder Jackie Hoffman envisioned and executed a 5K run in his westside neighborhood, gathering individuals from West and East Garfield Park to unite. Within a week of its inception, 20 community residents were participating. The community is engaged, and as the program continues to grow, building capacity for both community informed research and programmatic evaluation is essential to ensure positive change and community level impact that is desired by residents on the west side. Peace Runners 773 empowers, educates and brings awareness to holistic health and wellness through physical, mental and social wellbeing while creating safe spaces for movement in our underserved communities. Our intention is to build upon this existing infrastructure by hosting conversations about research through Run with a Researcher, bringing research into our events, and creating a Peace Runners 773 Community Research Steering Committee.

PLAN2THRIVE Initiative. Nicole Brookens, [PLAN4SUCCESS](#)

The PLAN2THRIVE Initiative, spearheaded by PLAN4SUCCESS, is dedicated to bolstering support for African-American students from Chicago attending over 30 colleges nationwide. Our focus is on enhancing their access to campus mental health resources. Launched in December 2023, our College Success Guides (CSG) initiative serves as a bridge between college life, lived experiences, and civic engagement. In the initial phase, CSGs will primarily collect data on existing mental health services at their respective campuses. Next, PLAN4SUCCESS partners will conduct focus groups to identify specific barriers faced by students struggling with mental health and wellness issues. Our overarching goal is to ensure all students have the mental health support they need to succeed academically and personally. This project not only aims to enrich PLAN4SUCCESS's research capabilities but also to develop impactful programs that can be scaled and replicated across more campuses, fostering a supportive environment for student well-being and success.

Partnership Development Grant Summaries

Promoting Empowerment among Individuals with Cancer and Other Complex Health Conditions to Optimize Health Outcomes and Survivorship through a Community-Academic Partnership

Ann Jackson, [Center for Food Equity in Medicine](#), and [Callie Walsh-Bailey](#), Medical Social Sciences, Feinberg School of Medicine

The Center for Food Equity in Medicine (CFFEIM) has been engaged in social science inquiry since its conception in 2019 and is seeking partnership with a social science researcher to bring research and evaluation to bear in understanding and solving pervasive social needs among people with a cancer diagnosis. The goal of our work is to empower community members with cancer and provide resources to help them be successful in obtaining the necessary care and supports they need to live. Dr. Ann Jackson, Executive Director of CFFEIM and Dr. Callie Walsh-Bailey, Assistant Professor in the Department of Medical Social Science at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, propose to leverage this ARCC Seed Grant to develop a partnership to synergize their efforts to improve care and outcomes for people contending with navigating systemic racism and other adverse social determinants of health that characterize their cancer treatment. The CFFEIM board will integrate Dr. Walsh-Bailey's support to deliver a conference convening Chicagoland residents living with cancer and their caregivers, community organizations, and healthcare constituents to empower patients to be self-advocates in their healthcare journey, and to elevate the needs and priorities of these patients to healthcare system constituents who can implement change in their organizations. The long-term goal of our partnership is to gain a greater understanding of what challenges patients and their support networks face in seeking equitable care, to co-develop solutions to these challenges, and engage in partnered research to test and implement the solutions to improve healthcare services and outcomes for marginalized Chicagoland communities.

Building a Partnership for the Betterment of Chicago Chinatown Community Health

Chunping Huang, [Chinese American Service League](#), and [Jennifer Young](#), Medical Social Sciences, Feinberg School of Medicine

The goal of this project is to foster a strong partnership rooted in improving the health and well-being of the Chicago Chinatown community. The Chinese American Service League (CASL) is a not-for-profit comprehensive social service agency serving Chinese immigrants in the Greater Chicago area for 45 years. CASL has undergone tremendous growth in the past five years to address the healthcare needs of the Chinatown community, starting in 2019 by offering behavioral health services and now currently working on opening primary care services. In building these services and integrating behavioral health and primary care, CASL has prioritized health-disparities research that is responsive to the community's needs. CASL will partner with Dr. Jennifer Young to build research capacity, identify areas of strength, and co-create a health disparities-based research agenda. This project will leverage Dr. Young's expertise as a Chinese American health researcher to build CASL's research program. Utilizing the resources provided by ARCC and CCH, we will build an equitable partnership rooted in trust and transparency in order to conduct a needs assessment and co-create the foundation and infrastructure for CASL to have the tools to rigorously evaluate their impact on Chinatown public health.

Assessing Cardiovascular Health Needs and Social Determinants of Health in Low-Income Asian American Communities through Community-Research Partnership

Hong Liu, [Midwest Asian Health Association](#), and [Jenny Jia](#), General Internal Medicine, Feinberg School of Medicine

The Midwest Asian Health Association and researchers from the Institute for Public Health and Medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine plan to partner together to develop a survey in order to better understand the cardiovascular (CV) health needs of Asian American Pacific Islanders and residents from the Bridgeport/Armour Square, or Chinatown, community. The Chinatown community has been a traditionally overlooked, underresearched, and underserved population that faces many systemic barriers to healthcare access, including but not limited to language barriers, lack of transportation, and stigmatization. The proposed project aims to design a culturally-sensitive and accessible survey to assess the CV health needs and challenges faced by Chinatown community members. The ultimate goal is to reduce these health disparities through improved community outreach, advocacy, education, and linkage to care. Together, the groups will work to establish a broader voice from which to advocate from and to build an organizational framework for more effective ground-up interventions for heart health that the community will benefit from.

Developing a Community Advisory Board for Research Focused on Improving Urinary Incontinence Treatment Access and Adherence in Older Black Women in Chicago

Sista Yaa Simpson, TACTS- ([The Association of Clinical Trials Services](#)), and [Oluwateniola \(Teni\) Brown](#), Obstetrics & Gynecology, Feinberg School of Medicine

Urinary incontinence (UI), the involuntary leakage of urine, is one of the most chronic common pelvic floor problems. UI affects 33 million adult women in the United States, of which 60% are 50 years and older. The prevalence of UI also increases with aging. UI is associated with substantial costs, morbidity including perineal infections, depression and anxiety, loss of work productivity, social isolation, and poor sexual function. Among older adults, UI is associated with institutionalizations, falls, and fractures, and can increase the burden on caregivers. Importantly, UI diminishes women's quality of life. Effective UI treatments are available; notably, treatment uptake and adherence are associated with improved urinary symptoms and health-related quality of life. Yet, despite effective UI treatment options, racial disparities in UI treatment uptake, adherence, and sustained engagement in care are significant, particularly for older Black women. Black women have 55% higher odds of UI medication non-adherence compared to White women. Black women are also 54% less likely than White women to receive UI medications known to be safer and more tolerable. They are also 17-34% less likely to receive and progressing to advanced more effective therapies for UI. Data from the academic lead's preliminary studies and work by others suggest that these UI treatment disparities result from multi-level (patient, provider, system) barriers for racially minoritized groups. Thus, identifying evidence-based intervention strategies to mitigate these barriers represents a critical gap in UI research. Yet, few studies have been conducted to fill this gap. This partnership will be between a community epidemiologist (Sista Yaa Simpson) and an academic partner who treats urinary incontinence. This proposal's academic and community leads have partnered to cultivate a research partnership where we develop evidence-based interventions that improve UI treatment access, adherence, and persistence in UI care for older Black women. A critical first step of our research efforts is to have a mechanism for input from the communities centered in this research at every step. The ARCC partnership development funds will support moving our partnership forward and establishing a Community Advisory Board for UI research focused on Improving treatment access and adherence in Older Black women in Chicago. Establishing a community advisory board for our work will ensure that our future research priorities, research aims, methodologies, approaches, and dissemination strategy are developed

in partnership with the communities that we center. The eventual long-term goal would be to develop an evidence-based intervention to increase UI treatment uptake and adherence among older Black women (which is not in the scope of this proposal).

Research Pilot Grant Summaries

Building a Community-Engaged Research Program to Improve Far South Side Neighborhoods

Laura Bailey, [Phalanx Family Services](#), and [Kiarri Kershaw](#), Preventive Medicine, Feinberg School of Medicine

The neighborhood environment is a root cause of health inequities on Chicago's Far South Side and a priority for Far South Side communities. Neighborhood environments are complex and multifaceted, including social conditions (e.g., cultural connectivity, social cohesion, crime and perceived safety), physical conditions (e.g. walkability, aesthetics, abandoned buildings, green space/parks), and service conditions (e.g., access to affordable, healthy foods). To make a lasting impact on community health, multifaceted improvements to neighborhood environments are needed. Most neighborhood environment research is done without the community voice, so it is unclear what matters most to community members about their neighborhoods. This Pilot seeks to fill this gap. Phalanx Family Services, a social service agency that has empowered the Far South for over 20 years (Community-Lead: Laura Bailey, Director of Operations), is partnering with Dr. Kiarri Kershaw (Associate Professor of Preventive Medicine) and Sam Battalio (Doctoral Candidate in Clinical Psychology) to do a comprehensive community "Neighborhood Priorities Assessment" followed by community action planning. This pilot will set the stage for a community-driven research program that aims to transform neighborhoods on the Far South Side.

User-Centered, Community-Engaged Design of a Text Message Library to Promote HPV Vaccination among Multi-Ethnic Immigrant Populations

Ella Berry, [Chinese Mutual Aid Association](#), and [Ha Ngan \(Milkie\) Vu](#), Preventive Medicine, Feinberg School of Medicine

Asian and Hispanic/Latinx foreign-born immigrants bear high burden of HPV-related cancers and have low HPV vaccination rates due to a lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate health promotion resources. This project will engage multi-ethnic immigrant parents in a user-centered design, mixed-methods research process to co-create text messages promoting HPV vaccination in Vietnamese, Spanish, and English. We will convene a research workgroup with immigrant parents as well as partners from Chinese Mutual Aid Association (an organization with 43 years of services to multi-ethnic immigrant communities in Chicagoland) and Northwestern University. After creating multilingual message drafts through co-design workshops, we will conduct qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys with 120 immigrant parents to evaluate and iteratively refine these messages for ease of understanding and cultural relevance. Additionally, we will explore barriers to and facilitators of using text messages to increase HPV vaccine literacy. The long-term goal is to develop effective, scalable HPV vaccine promotion resources for multi-ethnic immigrant populations to decrease HPV-related cancers. In addition, our project is expected to lead to increased research capacity and bidirectional learning and higher parental engagement with adolescent well-being and parental leadership to improve community health.

Exploring Access to And Quality of Obstetric Care for Racially and Ethnically Minoritized People With Disabilities

Amber Smock, [Access Living](#), and [Carol Haywood](#), Medical Social Sciences, Feinberg School of Medicine

There is evidence for inequities in obstetric outcomes for racially and ethnically minoritized individuals and people with disabilities, respectively. However, less is known about how the intersection of racism and ableism may impact access to and quality of obstetric care for racially and ethnically minoritized (REM) people with disabilities. Building on an ongoing, formalized, collaborative relationship, Access Living and Northwestern University researchers aim to understand barriers to obstetric care and perceptions of obstetric care quality by this population. The proposed study will use qualitative research methods that center the perspectives of community members. Insights from this study will inform future interventions to bridge gaps in access and quality of care for REM people with disabilities.

Advancing Immunization Equity on Chicago's South and West Sides: Assessing the Impact of EverThrive Illinois' Community-Centered National Infant Immunization Campaign

Andie Baker, [EverThrive Illinois](#), and [Marquita Lewis-Thames](#), Medical Social Sciences, Feinberg School of Medicine

EverThrive Illinois' National Infant Immunization Campaign plays a critical role in disseminating culturally-competent information about infant vaccinations among BIPOC communities on Chicago's South and West sides with low vaccination rates. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has disrupted childhood immunization efforts locally and nationally, resulting in decreasing vaccination rates and a dangerous resurgence of vaccine-preventable illnesses. With ARCC seed funds, EverThrive will collaborate with health behavior and community-engaged researcher Dr. Marquita Lewis-Thames to evaluate the impact of this infant immunization campaign. In doing so, we aim to ensure that our outreach strategies and materials are aligned with the needs of the communities we serve and to share the results of the research and best practices with other public health professionals, community-based organizations, and leaders in the field to inform their work.

ARCC Background

Established in 2008, the [Alliance for Research with Chicagoland Communities](#) (ARCC) supports authentic community-academic research partnerships between Chicagoland communities and Northwestern University that improve health and equity. ARCC advocates for a collaborative approach to research that honors, is driven by, and shares power with communities, as local, cultural, and lived experience experts. ARCC is guided by our [Community-Academic Steering Committee](#) comprised of thirteen community-and faith-based organizations, two public agencies, and eleven 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