



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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CITY OF CHICAGO AWARDS \$24 MILLION TO THE CHICAGO COOK WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP TO AID IN MOBILIZING AND SUSTAINING A CHICAGO COMMUNITY HEALTH RESPONSE CORPS TEAM

CHICAGO – Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) today announced the City has awarded \$24 million to the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (The Partnership) to serve as the lead coordinating organization for the City's Community Health Response Corps (Response Corps). This program is a part of the Chicago Recovery Plan, created to support recovery from the social, economic, and health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Partnership, which was selected through a competitive process, will support community-based organizations (CBOs) to hire and supervise Response Corps members—resulting in approximately 150 new, sustained jobs.

The Response Corps initiative will mobilize a team of community health outreach workers and build upon many of the learnings and gains from the City's community outreach actions during the COVID-19 pandemic. This new Response Corps team will leverage the expertise and infrastructure CDPH, and its City and community partners developed for the COVID-19 emergency response while shifting to promoting overall health and resource connections in the City's prioritized community areas based on economic hardship, COVID-19 vulnerability, and community safety.

"The City's Community Health Response Corps is a necessary tool to support our most vulnerable residents who are still experiencing the social, economic and health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic," said Mayor Lightfoot. "This collaboration between the City, the Chicago Department of Public Health and the Chicago Cook Workforce represents our commitment to taking care of our communities, and will provide expanded access to much-needed resources to ensure each of our residents can live healthy lives."

"The Response Corps is an important step toward achieving the vision of Healthy Chicago 2025," said CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady, M.D. "The Partnership stepped up during the COVID-19 response and led an innovative, wide-ranging



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program that has become a national model for building a public health workforce from within the hardest-hit communities through trusted, community-based partners. We are grateful that they will continue working hand-in-hand with neighborhood organizations to create a Chicago where all people and all communities have equitable access to the resources and opportunities they need to live their healthiest lives.”

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated long-standing health disparities and necessitated swift mobilization in communities with high vulnerability to serious COVID-19 outcomes. The City responded by investing deeply in community health outreach and resources in high-risk communities, including through the formation of a Racial Equity Rapid Response Team (RERRT) and the COVID-19 Contact Tracing Corps.

The Partnership was previously selected to assist 31 Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that directly hired and deployed community members for the COVID-19 Contact Tracing Corps. They also engaged residents in public health guidance, supported vaccine outreach, and linked people affected by COVID-19 to necessary healthcare resources. The Response Corps will leverage learnings from the Contact Tracing Corps model to provide continued pathways to employment and ensure residents in our hard-hit communities get connected to much-needed resources. “We are honored to be selected for this incredibly impactful award and look forward to continuing to assist residents and CBOs meeting the region’s healthcare challenges,” said Partnership Interim CEO Patrick Combs.

“The Partnership’s experience operating the Contact Tracing Corps – ensuring Corps members lived and worked in communities hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, and bringing critical public health services to people who needed them most – informed our proposal and will continue in our work going forward.”

Since 2020, under The Partnership’s leadership of the Contact Tracing Corps program, more than 800 Chicagoans were hired, trained in an earn-as-you-learn program through City Colleges of Chicago, and successfully served as the community-based, on-the-ground backbone of Chicago’s COVID response. As contact tracers and outreach workers, they handled more than 500,000 calls, knocked on more than 19,000 doors, and provided resource coordination to over 3,000 Chicagoans. More than 96% of these corps members were Black or Latinx, and almost 90% lived in the hardest-hit communities.

“The Partnership provided invaluable support to the Calumet Area Industrial Commission (CAIC) as part of the Contact Tracing Corps program, allowing us to hire Chicago ninth and tenth ward residents who are known throughout the



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communities served. The dedicated staff continue to 'learn while they earned,' taking advantage of training offered by The Partnership to improve outcomes in their own neighborhoods," said Ted Stalnos, President of CAIC, one of the original 31 subcontracted CBOs.

Through a lead coordinating organization model, the new Response Corps will retain critical capacity to pivot and deploy resources according to identified needs quickly, ensure uniform service delivery and quality standards, access training and workforce opportunities, and remove the administrative and operational burden that often prohibits smaller organizations from participating in these types of large-scale opportunities.

The Response Corps allows CDPH to transition from emergency response to community health response, particularly in addressing the burden of chronic diseases and root causes that contribute to Chicago's racial life expectancy gap. Efforts to prevent serious outcomes of COVID-19, including vaccination outreach, will continue through this new effort. The work of the Response Corps is aligned with the vision of CDPH's [Healthy Chicago 2025](#) plan to close the racial life expectancy gap in Chicago, which has reached 10 years between Black and white Chicagoans, and reverse declines in life expectancy for Latinx populations.

The Community Health Response Corps is just one initiative within the broader \$1.2 billion Chicago Recovery Plan to promote safe and thriving communities and an equitable economic recovery from COVID-19. For more information, including funding opportunities, visit chicago.gov/recoveryplan.

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About The Partnership: The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (The Partnership) is a non-profit umbrella organization operating the public workforce system for the City of Chicago and Cook County. The Partnership combines federal and philanthropic resources to provide comprehensive workforce development services to employers and job seekers. As the largest public workforce development system in the nation, The Partnership has helped place more than 70,000 individuals in employment; collaborated with more than 2,000 employers; and administered more than \$400 million in federal and philanthropic funds. The Partnership's network consists of 90+ community-based organizations, American Job Centers, satellite sites and sector-driven centers, serving more than 140,000 people annually. Learn more at www.chicookworks.org.