



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 30, 2020

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR LIGHTFOOT AND CDPH ANNOUNCE \$56M GRANT TO CHICAGO COOK
WORKFORCE PARTNERSHIP AND PARTNERS TO BOLSTER CONTACT TRACING
EFFORTS FOR COVID-19 CASES IN CHICAGO**

*Agencies to engage organizations in communities of high economic hardship to create
600 new contact tracing jobs*

CHICAGO — Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) today announced the City has awarded a \$56 million grant to Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership (The Partnership), in collaboration with the University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health, NORC at the University of Chicago, Malcolm X College – one of the City Colleges of Chicago – and Sinai Urban Health Institute, to carry out contact tracing services in Chicago, with an effort based in communities most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. These organizations will lead a health-equity based approach to further contain the spread of COVID-19, which will include disbursing 85% of the total grant funding to community organizations in areas of high economic hardship to train and certify a 600-person workforce that will support contact tracing. The 600 newly created jobs will be hired directly from the communities of high economic hardship that have been adversely impacted by COVID-19.

"COVID-19's outrageously disproportionate impact on Chicago's most vulnerable communities has demanded that we as a city step up and take swift action to support our fellow residents in need," said Mayor Lightfoot. "This exciting contact tracing initiative will not only significantly bolster our efforts to stay ahead of this terrible disease, but it will also create new jobs and opportunities for individuals to join in the fight against COVID-19, as well as develop invaluable skills for their own future careers in public health and patient care."

"A robust and comprehensive contact tracing program is key to containing the spread of COVID-19 and further driving down the number of new cases," said CDPH Commissioner, Allison Arwady, M.D. "We insisted that this program not only focus on communities most impacted by the virus but that The Partnership and its sub-delegates hire from these neighborhoods to build the contact tracing corps. In that



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



way this will not only operationalize an important tool in the fight against COVID-19, but also create thriving wage jobs.”

The Partnership was chosen by a panel of community and city experts from a field of almost two dozen applications. This grant will fund the creation of the COVID Contact Tracing Corps and the COVID Resource Coordination Hub, which together will hire 600 people to provide contact tracing services to all of Chicago. As part of the grant, The Partnership will be conducting a second competitive bidding process to award the majority of the funding to at least 30 community-based organizations that will recruit and hire the contact tracers and resource coordinators under this grant.

“In addition to suppressing the transmission of COVID-19, contact tracing can be a doorway to family-sustaining careers in the healthcare field,” said Karin Norington-Reaves, The Partnership’s Chief Executive Officer. “Along with our partners we look forward to not only impacting community health but also creating economic opportunity for African-American and Latinx residents most deeply affected by this pandemic.”

In an effort to provide equitable opportunities to neighborhood organizations, the [Chicagoland Workforce Funders Alliance](#) will be working with [AMPT](#), a capacity-building provider for non-profits, to provide technical assistance to organizations applying for this second round grant. Community-based organizations that are interested in applying for this second-round grant can visit [Chicago.gov/ContactTracing](https://chicago.gov/ContactTracing) to sign up for one-on-one technical assistance for this application.

“The Chicagoland Workforce Funders Alliance and its new Equitable Recovery Corps Fund is designed to help ensure employment initiatives associated with the recovery maximize their racial equity impact,” said Molly Leonard, co-chair of the Chicagoland Workforce Funders Alliance. “In consultation with subject matter experts at AMPT, the City and the Fund will work with Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership to ensure an inclusive process to select neighborhood organizations to hire contact tracers, including the provision of technical assistance during the procurement.”

The Request for Proposals (RFP), in which the City has allocated \$56 million in COVID-19 relief funding from the CDC and the Illinois Department of Public Health, mandates that the lead agency will be required to sub-grant 85% of contact tracing funding to at least 30 neighborhood-based organizations located within, or primarily serving residents of, communities of high economic hardship. Many of these same communities have been the most adversely impacted by COVID-19.



These neighborhood-based organizations will be responsible for recruiting, hiring and supporting a workforce of 600 contact tracers, supervisors, and referral coordinators.

Employees hired through this program will be supported by an “Earn-and-Learn” program that helps them pursue higher education and credentialing, which will give contact tracers the ability to pursue stable, middle-income jobs that can support their livelihoods beyond the height of the pandemic. Contact tracers will earn \$20 per hour with supervisors earning \$24 per hour. CDPH will also require that applicants meet these minimum salary requirements and provide full health benefits. Organizations who are not able to meet these criteria will be able to submit a written statement to provide an explanation.

Alongside greater access to testing, contact tracing is an important tool in this phase of the City’s response to the pandemic. Contact tracing is a multi-step process of identifying and contacting anyone who has been in close, prolonged contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19. The process begins when a case investigator interviews people who have tested positive for the virus to create a list of individuals with whom they have been in contact during their infectious period. Once contacts have been identified, contact tracers reach out to these individuals to provide guidance about appropriate steps they can take to protect themselves, their loved ones, and the public, such as self-quarantine or isolation. Public health officials then stay in touch with these individuals – mostly via electronic means (text services or reporting on a web/mobile platform) – to track the progression of any symptoms throughout the course of an illness.

“As we build out this contact tracing corps, we also want to enlist the citizens of Chicago – we need you to answer your phones when a contact tracer calls and help us gather the information we need,” said Dr. Arwady. “That has been a challenge, and without that help it will be more difficult to contain the spread of this virus.”

Since the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, CDPH has been conducting case investigations and contact tracing, primarily among persons diagnosed in congregate settings and among healthcare workers.

Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership Partners Include:

University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health

“In order to combat the virus, we need contact tracers who are adequately trained to gain trust in Black and Brown communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19,” said Wayne Giles, MD, MS, dean of the University of Illinois at Chicago



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



(UIC) School of Public Health. “The contact tracers need to come from the impacted communities and we hope through this work we will create a pathway to the health professions and public health.”

NORC at the University of Chicago

“Chicago is taking steps to make systemic change that will have a lasting positive impact on the city. We are honored to be working alongside such dedicated organizations in our hometown,” said Caitlin Oppenheimer, director of the Public Health research department at NORC.

Malcolm X College

"As a Center of Excellence in health sciences, Malcolm X College is proud to lead City Colleges of Chicago's contact tracing training partnership with the Department of Public Health," said Dean of Health Sciences Roy Walker. "City Colleges is committed to preparing Chicagoans, especially those from communities most deeply impacted by COVID-19, to keep our fellow residents safe and healthy. We are ready to work with contact tracers to launch and advance their healthcare careers."

Sinai Urban Health Institute

“Sinai Urban Health Institute (SUHI) is an innovator and respected leader in the training, hiring and supervision of community health workers (CHWs). Through our Center for CHW Research, Outcomes and Workforce Development, or CROWD, we are excited to work with the Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership to train CBOs and their project workforces on contact tracing, as well as develop earn-and-learn pathways to foster skills for long-term work to address health equity. We’re looking forward to working together to build workforce to not just respond to pandemic at this moment, but also have the skills and training that will make them valuable and marketable in the environment that will evolve out of COVID-19.”

###