



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**MAYOR LORI E. LIGHTFOOT UNVEILS EQUITABLE SOCIAL SERVICE
CONTRACTING FRAMEWORK**

City will immediately enact a First in the Nation Equity in Social Services Contracting Policy to ensure diverse providers can participate in the recovery of Chicago communities

CHICAGO – Today at the Readiness Summit, Mayor Lori Lightfoot announced the unveiling of the Citywide Equitable Social Services Contracting Policy. This vision sets the goals through which the City will make its Social Services RFP and contracting processes more accessible to local and smaller organizations. As a first act to advance the vision of the framework, the Mayor also announced three initiatives underway that will promote temporary cash flow relief and prompt payment to all organizations who contract with some city departments.

“Equity must be at the core of all City initiatives, particularly those that aim to help our communities recover and advance their priorities,” said Mayor Lightfoot. “The unveiling of Chicago’s Equitable Society Contracting Policy is an accomplishment that will redesign our social value around contracting processes, making them more accessible to small, city-based organizations. This will undoubtedly contribute to our ongoing efforts to revitalize our local economies and benefit delegates and residents in need.”

Understanding that our collective vision of a more equitable Chicago requires every member of civil society to participate, the City of Chicago is committing to conducting its delegate agency contracting to achieve better, more inclusive outcomes. The City of Chicago spends hundreds of millions of dollars annually on the provision of social services. From youth services to interventions for victims of violence, these nonprofit organizations are delegated the responsibility to carry out important public services.

Traditionally, RFPs have been structured to award contracts based on a delivery strategy for the services requested in the scope, often without consideration of the provider’s location. The importance of ensuring providers have a deep cultural understanding of the communities they serve, and the capacity to address the need



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in the context of community culture is of increasing importance as we analyze the effectiveness of our existing delegate agency process and performance. We have an opportunity to learn from and advance these practices systemwide.

Through Chicago's Equitable Social Services Contracting Policy, the city will create social value in our contracts to help to make Chicago a more equitable and fair city that distributes economic benefits throughout the communities that have traditionally been underrepresented, both now and in the future. Specific high-level goals include:

- Reaching historically underrepresented organizations doing impactful work to ensure smaller non-profits can successfully compete for contracts
- Strengthening organizations indigenous to and led by individuals representing the communities they serve
- Increasing resources in high-need communities
- Ensuring cultural competence in organizations to serve the community in ways that are responsive to diversity in the contracting process
- Being accountable to results by collecting key metrics to measure and ultimately advance the equitable contracting framework

The City will develop a strategic plan for advancing the broader set of initiatives by April 2022. The plan will examine and identify any inequities built-in to the City's practices and policies related to allocating funding to service providers. It will also seek to lift barriers to create a more level playing field for equitable participation and inclusion in the City's delegate agency contracting process.

Even before the plan is finalized, the Mayor has already announced three initiatives that are underway to lift some of these barriers

- **Advance Mobilization Payments:** Subject to the availability of funds, upfront funding to eligible delegates to begin delivering services outlined in selected delegate agency agreements.
- **Re-structured Delegate Agency Contracting Process:** This work will take appropriate action on the front end of the procurement and grant lifecycle to standardize equity contracting practice across City departments and streamline the contract execution workflow. The new process is intended to expedite the initial payment to all delegate organizations at the start of the award term, incorporate the mechanisms necessary to request and disburse advances, and prevent waste to ensure grant funding serves its intended purpose.



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- **Technical Assistance to Human Services Organizations with City Contracts:** The city will provide a suite of technical assistance tools that will be available to support small, community-based delegate organizations new to the city's contracting, timely vouchering, payment, record-keeping, and reporting requirements.

The Readiness Summit was launched on February 4 with the goal of making non-profits, community organizations and vendors throughout Chicago and Cook County aware of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and other economic recovery funding opportunities. The city of Chicago is committed to bringing more locally based and culturally representative organizations closer to these opportunities. We are working not only to support them on how to become eligible for these funds but also making structural changes to our system that will keep them as our delegates long after ARPA is needed.

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