



Leaders for a New Chicago Award Frequently Asked Questions | 2026

What is the Leaders for a New Chicago Award? The Leaders for a New Chicago Award, a collaboration between the Field Foundation and MacArthur Foundation, recognizes leaders who are redefining civic leadership and reimagining our city's future. The award is designed to support leadership, provide flexible resources, and help elevate the work recipients are doing to drive transformative change in their communities. We believe their vision and impact are helping to write the next chapter in Chicago's ever-unfolding story.

What do award recipients receive? Award recipients receive a \$50,000 no-strings-attached award and a \$25,000 general operating grant for their affiliated organizations. Leaders who are affiliated with multiple organizations eligible for this award will decide which organization will receive the \$25,000 general operating grant.

Why did the Field and MacArthur Foundations create this award? The Leaders for a New Chicago Award was established to address the need to support community-based, grassroots leaders. It aims to bring new voices, creativity, and innovation into the systems that shape Chicago.

Who is eligible for the award? Leaders who have been affiliated with [eligible organizations](#) for more than one year can self-nominate or be nominated for the award. Leaders may include staff, board members, advisory council members, etc. Consultants are not eligible. Those nominating leaders are not required to be affiliated with the nominee's organization.

Eligible organizations include:

- Field Foundation core grant recipients in the last two years working in ART, Journalism & Storytelling, or Justice & Community Power Building.
- MacArthur Foundation Chicago Commitment or Journalism & Media grant recipients in the last three years.

Can I nominate myself? Yes! We encourage self-nomination. Leaders are often the best advocates for their own work and impact. Whether you nominate yourself or someone nominates you, all nominations go through the same selection process and are evaluated equally by our selection committee.

How are award recipients selected? A selection committee, facilitated by the Field and MacArthur Foundations' staff, manages the selection process using a [rubric](#) to review nominations and recommend the next recipients of the Leaders for a New Chicago Award. Awardees are announced in the summer timeframe.

A collaboration between the Field Foundation & the MacArthur Foundation



How are award recipients announced? The Field and MacArthur Foundations will announce the 2026 Leaders for a New Chicago in the summer timeframe through a joint news release, as well as website, email and social media communications. Please note: To honor our commitment to transparency, this is a public announcement. We do not make anonymous awards.

Is this a grant or a fellowship? The Leaders for a New Chicago Award is neither a grant nor time-bound fellowship. It is an award that recognizes leadership and provides unrestricted funding. No spending guidelines. No reporting requirements. 100% optional time commitment.

What do you mean by “no-strings-attached”? “No-strings attached” means leaders are free to use their prize money as they see fit. No spending guidelines. No required reporting. 100% optional time commitment. We provide unrestricted awards because leaders know their own needs best. We also recognize that nonprofit leaders often lack the financial resources to fully address their personal and professional needs. Unrestricted funding allows leaders to make meaningful choices – whether it’s buying a car, making a down payment on a home, growing their skills, or investing in their wellbeing. Through this approach, we also hope to gain deeper insight into what nonprofit leaders truly need, allowing us to better support them in the future.

What do you mean by “A New Chicago”? Chicago’s story is one of constant reinvention—from rebuilding after the Great Fire, to the cultural, social, and political shifts spurred by the Great Migration, to the city’s rich history of community organizing for social change. As we look toward Chicago’s next chapter, we envision a just and thriving city shaped by the voices and contributions of all its communities. We view “A New Chicago” as an idea that is continuously evolving, with award recipients playing a central role.

How does this award connect to the work of the Field and MacArthur Foundations? The Leaders for a New Chicago Award advances the Field Foundation’s mission to support community power building in Chicago and reflects the MacArthur Foundation’s steadfast commitment to the city. By shining light on grassroots leaders whose work often goes underrecognized, the Leaders for a New Chicago Award seeks to create pathways for individuals to lead within and across our communities. We believe their voices and impact have a vital role to play in forging our collective future.

Where can I learn more? For additional information about the Leaders for a New Chicago Award, please visit fieldfoundation.org. For direct inquiries, please e-mail leaders@fieldfoundation.org.

Key Dates:

- **Nomination portal opens: Wednesday, February 18, 2026, at 12:01am**
- **Nomination portal closes: Friday, March 20, 2026, at 11:59pm**
- **Award Announcement: Summer 2026**

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