

WEST SIDE UNITED: Building Blocks to Better Health

What is West Side United?

West Side United (WSU) is an ambitious health equity effort by six hospitals (Rush, Presence, Lurie Children's, Sinai, Cook County Health and Hospital Systems, and UI Health) working to reduce life expectancy gaps of up to 16 years between Chicago's downtown and 10 West Side neighborhoods by 2030. WSU seeks to improve neighborhood health by addressing inequality in healthcare, education, economic vitality and the physical environment using a cross-sector, place-based strategy. Partners include healthcare providers, community organizations, residents, the faith-based community, business, government and others working together to coordinate investments and share outcomes. Visit www.westsideunited.org for more details.

What is the West Side United Small Business Grant Pool and who is funding it?

WSU seeks to distribute \$85,000 to West Side small businesses who are creating jobs and wealth in their neighborhoods. These small grants can supplement other capital that entrepreneurs are planning to invest in projects that will help them further strengthen their businesses. The grants will complement several other initiatives WSU has undertaken to address West Side inequality (refer to westsideunited.org for further details). Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago, Presence Health, Rush University Medical Center, and Northern Trust are providing the funds, while Accion Chicago is serving as the fiscal agent for the program.

Who is Accion Chicago?

Accion helps neighborhood entrepreneurs grow. Accion provides the coaching, capital, and connections small business owners need to create wealth and jobs throughout Illinois and Indiana. Visit www.accionchicago.org for more details. Accion had funded loans for more than 100 small businesses on the West Side in just the last ten years, providing over \$750,000 and helping entrepreneurs create or retain 300 jobs.

How large are the grants?

Entrepreneurs can request between \$1,000 and \$15,000, and must articulate in their grant applications how they will use the funds to grow their businesses.

Who can apply for the grants?

The owners of small business located in 10 West Side Neighborhoods – Austin, Belmont Cragin, East Garfield Park, Humboldt Park, Lower West Side (Pilsen), Near Westside, North Lawndale, South Lawndale (Little Village), West Garfield Park and West Town – are eligible to apply. Strong for-profit and nonprofit small businesses are eligible.

How will the four funding organizations decide which applications to fund?

The criteria that the funders will use include the following:

- Strength of the small business (measured by 2017 and 2018 profit and revenue)
- Importance of the business to the surrounding community (evaluated based on the narrative the entrepreneur provides in the grant application)
- Proposed use of the grant funds (evaluated based on the description in the grant application)

The funders will attempt to distribute grants to a number of West Side neighborhoods while funding only strong applications.

When are applications due, and when will the grant awards be announced?

Applications are due on October 31 and the grants will be announced by December 15.

How can entrepreneurs apply, and who can answer my questions?

West Side small business owners are encouraged to apply via www.westsideunited.org/events. Paper copies will also be available through Accion Chicago (1436 W Randolph) as well as WSU partners that will be listed on the web site. Applicants with questions should contact info@westsideunited.org.