



2025

# ANNUAL REPORT

Building a just and  
equitable Chicago.

# STAFF



**Candace Williams**  
Interim Executive  
Director



**Sofia Sabatés**  
Director of Finance and  
Administration



**Rachel Pate**  
Director of Civic  
Programming



**Christina Córdova-Herrera**  
Director of Communications  
and Narrative Strategy



**Denee Hill**  
Communications Manager

# BOARD



**Terri A. Johnson**  
Board Co-Chair



**Tamela Meehan**  
Board Co-Chair



**Lauren Burdette**  
Through September 2025



**Tiffany Ford**  
Through March 2025



**Riley Jones, IV**  
Board Member



**Cliff Helm**  
Board Member



**Sean Washington**  
Treasurer



**Vanessa Lee**  
Secretary  
Joined May 2025



**Ivan Arenas**  
Joined December 2025

# REFLECTING ON 2025

As we reflect on 2025, I am filled with gratitude for the resilience and unity demonstrated by our community amidst significant political uncertainty and attacks on vulnerable neighbors across Chicago. This year, the launch of our co-governance pilots has been a crucial step in reimagining power dynamics and empowering local voices. As we engage in this learning process, we see how vital community collaboration is to building pathways for change. Our Fellowship program has also evolved, with intentional efforts to engage alumni through curated spaces that foster connection, growth, and inspiration.

Despite the challenges we faced, Chicagoans have shown up for one another, standing firmly with their neighbors. We remain steadfast in our commitment to advancing equity, particularly in the wake of the impacts from the current federal administration. Together, we are navigating these turbulent times, and your unwavering support reinforces our shared belief that equity work is necessary, collaborative, and transformative. Thank you for being a vital part of this journey, championing change, and building a future that works for all Chicagoans.



In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Williams".

**She/Her/Hers**  
**Candace Williams**

**Interim Executive Director**  
**Chicago United for Equity**

*Acknowledge history. Shift power. Build accountability.*

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## Award Winning



### Public Narrative's Dr. Timuel Black, Jr. Award for Civic Engagement

Public Narrative presented CUE with this award at its 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Media Awards. This award celebrates Dr. Black's remarkable legacy and reflects both his and Studs Terkel's shared values: a commitment to elevating community narratives, engaging in active citizenship, and building a more fair and just society.

### Publicity Club of Chicago's 30 Under 30

Our very own Denee Hill, CUE's Communications Manager, was selected as one of the honorees in the 2025 Publicity Club of Chicago's 30 Under 30! This award recognizes outstanding accomplishments and contributions by young professionals in communications, marketing, and public relations. The award was presented at PCC's 67<sup>th</sup> Annual Golden Trumpet Awards.



### Breakin' It Down Denise Stennis Award

CUE is proud to be a recipient of the Denise Stennis Award at the 2025 Breakin' It Down Conference! This prestigious award honors individuals and organizations who exemplify excellence in the fields of nonprofit, philanthropy, and fundraising while demonstrating a steadfast commitment to advancing racial equity, particularly in under-recognized communities in the Chicago area.

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## Our Learning Community & Civic Impact Projects

### CUE's Racial Equity Fellowship

We welcomed our seventh cohort of CUE Fellows, growing to 210 Fellows since 2018. The CUE Equity Fellowship is a year-long program designed to bring together 15-20 leaders across identities, neighborhoods, and perspectives in government, media, research, philanthropy, storytelling, organizing, and advocacy, to strengthen their racial equity practice.



### Launching Chicago's Co-Governance definition and framework

CUE and The Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice published the finalized Co-Governance definition and framework for Chicago after compiling feedback from Chicagoans during various community conversations and the public comment period. CUE and OERJ, in partnership with Race Forward, hosted "Building A Chicago Where Community Meets Governance" in June. This convening featured a fireside chat with Mayor Brandon Johnson and Race Forward's Candace Moore, and engaged attendees in activities to deepen their understanding of the co-governance initiative.



# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## Civic Impact Projects: Launching Co-Governance Pilot Initiatives



Three pilot initiatives have been selected to test our co-governance definition and framework, focusing on Equitable Decarbonization, Reentry Services, and Urban Agriculture. Each pilot presents distinct challenges that will shape their approaches. CUE and OERJ anticipate that the framework will provide valuable guidance on effectively tackling these challenges, ensuring that all stakeholders are actively engaged in their success.

In October 2025, CUE and OERJ, in partnership with BECOME, convened more than 30 government, community, and resident leaders for a virtual visioning session launching the City of Chicago's Co-Governance Initiative evaluation strategy. The session aimed to collectively shape how the co-governance initiative will be evaluated throughout the engagement with the pilot initiatives.

BECOME is a nonprofit Chicago organization that facilitates community leadership and co-creates strategies and solutions to help communities actualize their collective liberation.



Urban Agriculture



Equitable  
Decarbonization



Returning Resident  
Services

# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## Expanding Civic Imagination: Fellowship Evaluation Study

The CUE Fellowship Evaluation highlights the impact of the CUE Racial Equity Fellowship on its participants and the program's evolution over time.

In collaboration with Dr. Tiffany Ford from the University of Illinois Chicago School of Public Health, we conducted an ethnographic study examining the influence of CUE Fellows across Cook County. The report 'Evaluation of a Local Cross-Sectoral Collaborative to Address Racial Inequity' highlights the impact the CUE Fellowship has had on Fellows and their work in addressing structural inequities across Cook County.

### The Fellowship impacted Fellows through three main channels:

**Fostered Meaningful Relationships:** The program created a network of "like-minded people" who serve as a support system, thought partners, collaborators for institutional organizing (inside/outside organizing), and professional relationships.

**Expanded Skills and Confidence:** Fellows gained greater confidence to speak about racial justice in their institutions, broadened their perspectives to view government as a potential partner in their work, and developed soft skills such as patience and listening.

**Provided Tools and Concepts:** Key concrete tools and frameworks taught and utilized by Fellows include the Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA), power mapping, and co-design.



# 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

## Expanding Civic Imagination: Meet This Moment Action Series



Fellows are spearheading initiatives to strengthen connections and cultivate civic imagination in response to the ongoing political climate and challenges facing communities across Chicago.

The 'Meet This Moment Action Series' has been established to address the pressing nature of today's evolving political landscape through collective action, community care, and strategic advocacy. This program aims to not only address the immediate effects of federal and local policy changes but also to drive efforts toward sustainable, long-term solutions, providing various avenues for community involvement.



Through a series of six interconnected elements, the program empowers CUE Fellows and partners with essential tools to navigate the current context, foster solidarity among diverse communities, and implement direct actions. These activities have taken place in person and virtually since October 2025 and continue through March 2026.

# FINANCE OVERVIEW

## Finances

In 2025, Chicago United for Equity maintained its commitment to transparency and accountability in financial management. We successfully directed 74% of our total budget toward our programs and initiatives, maximizing impact as we strive to further our mission.

### Revenue

Total 2025 Revenue	\$899,828
Grant Revenue	90%
Earned Revenue	8%
Individual Donors	2%

### General Operating and Multi-Year Grants

Generating Operating	79%
Multi-Year Grants	76%

## Thank You!

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our supporters, donors, partners, volunteers, and the Chicago community for their unwavering support in 2025. Your dedication has been crucial to advancing our mission and amplifying our impact in the community.

## Institutional Funders

- Albert Pick, Jr. Fund
- Chicago Community Trust
- Crossroads Fund
- Field Foundation of Illinois
- John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
- JP Morgan Chase Foundation
- Paul M. Angell Family Foundation
- Polk Bros. Foundation
- Race Forward
- Robert Woods Johnson Fund
- Square One Foundation
- The Chicago Community Trust
- Tides Foundation
- Walder Foundation
- Woods Fund Chicago

# FUTURE OUTLOOK

## The Journey Ahead

At Chicago United for Equity, we remain committed to collective action and dismantling inequitable systems by connecting and amplifying the love for Chicago across our communities. In the face of growing challenges, we need courageous voices, committed partners, and engaged community members to ensure that every decision and policy reflects the insights and leadership of those directly impacted.

Here's how you can make a difference:

- **Stay informed:** Keep up with our work and share our vision.
- **Get involved:** Participate in our initiatives and community discussions.
- **Support our mission:** Contribute or collaborate with us to sustain this vital work.

Together, we can build a city where equity is not merely an aspiration—it's a reality. We invite you to join us in this critical work today.

In Solidarity,  
The Chicago United for Equity Team

