



2023 Annual Report

*Empowering Equity:
A Year of Growth and Collaboration*





Dear CUE Community,

We are thrilled to present Chicago United for Equity's Annual Report for 2023, a testament to our collective efforts in fostering an inclusive and equitable Chicago. 2023 has been a year of growth and deep collaboration.

In the past year, Chicago United for Equity has remained steadfast in its commitment to addressing systemic disparities and advancing equity across the city. Through collaborative initiatives, strategic partnerships, and unwavering dedication, we have achieved significant milestones.

Together, we will continue to champion equity, break down barriers, and create a Chicago where every individual has the opportunity to thrive.

In community,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Niketa Brar'.

Niketa Brar

Executive Director

Chicago United for Equity

Acknowledge history. Shift power. Build accountability.

CUE Fellowship

The Fellowship has mobilized nearly 200 racial equity fellows from various sectors, including government, philanthropy, research, and community organizing, since 2017. Over the course of nine monthly workshops, each cohort delves into community-led policymaking frameworks. Together, they collaboratively construct a shared analysis to comprehend the historical precedents of our beloved city and work towards developing solutions for real civic challenges in Chicago.

2023 Fellows Project Highlights



Liú Chen:

From the Pavement Up: Growing a Community-Driven Oral History Archive is a project that empowers public housing residents to shape the Oral History Archive - its contents, policies, and more - at the National Public Housing Museum (NPHM). The project expands the training and strategic decision-making to center residents in collecting, preserving, and sharing their histories. The project supports NPHM's mission of advancing equity and justice.



Nneka Onwuzurike:

Redefining Wealth & Democratizing City Grantmaking is a project that aims to create a participatory grantmaking process for Chicago to invest in worker cooperatives. Community members will vote for the grantees. The project will challenge individualism and resource hoarding, and promote collectivism and equity. The project will inspire others to adopt participatory and co-governance models.



Jeni Hebert Beirne:

Transforming Community Research in Chicago is a project that aims to use the learnings from COVID-19 as an opportunity to change the nature of community-based research in Chicago. The project will promote community-led, liberatory research and reduce opportunities for extractive research. The project will invest in community control in community-based research accountability in the academia, challenging the dominant narratives in research and contributing to more equity and justice-centered research.

Strategic Plan

We codified our vision for the future through five strategic directions and implementation plans, set to begin in 2024 and span the next five years. This collaborative effort involved more than 50 members of our community, board, staff, Fellows, and partners. Together, we engaged in a co-designing process facilitated by Seva Gandhi from Collaborative Connections to identify and define these strategic directions.

We're working to transform Chicagoans' relationship to power

By activating a constellation of racial justice advocates inside and outside civic systems, changing how they work and who they work for, we're drawing a collective blueprint of the future we deserve and building the foundations of a new world.

Catalyzing and Aligning the CUE Network

- Connecting Fellows via an online database and website updates
- Developing a shared analysis through various community convenings and cafe-style discussions.

Redesigning and Supporting Civic Institutions for Public Accountability

- Co-designing a vision of structural change for government, philanthropy, research, and media through civic strategy tables.
- Defining co-governance through public engagement series and a co-governance committee in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice
- Implementing models of co-governance with city departments.
- Supporting Fellows' projects to redesign civic institutions.

Expanding Our Capacity and Nurturing Our Well-being

- Staff & Board Development, including recruiting, hiring, and onboarding new executive director.
- Recruiting, hiring, and onboarding additional staff to support communications, policy, and organizing.

Telling Our Story to Grow Our Impact

- Building a Foundation for Expanded Narrative Work
 - Collecting stories of impact for the CUE Storybank
- Sharing CUE Network Projects to seed wide impact through our annual report and Equity Playbook.

State of the CUE-nion

To share our strategic plan with our community, we hosted our first ever 'State of the CUE-nion' in November 2023. Over 70 attendees joined us in our office and virtually to hear our plans for the future and ways they can continue to support our work.



Partnerships

Embarked on an exploration of co-governance. Through our partnership with the Mayor's Office of Equity and Racial Justice, we have begun defining what co-governance means to Chicago. Our 2023 Fellows were able to engage with the Chicago Department of Public Health through an Equity Design Lab process to co-design how the department builds an advisory council that is responsive and inclusive of individuals harmed by substance abuse.



Finances

Chicago United for Equity remains transparent and accountable in its financial management. We have efficiently allocated 72 percent of our overall budget to our programs and initiatives, ensuring maximum impact in advancing our mission.

Additionally, we have increased our general operating grants with a specific and intentional focus on supporting staff growth in 2024 and ensuring reserves to weather any unforeseen challenges, with CUE currently holding five months' worth of expenses in reserves to provide coverage for any unexpected instances that may arise.

Revenue

Total 2023 Revenue \$659,335.62

Grant revenue 79%

Earned 18%

Individual Donors 2%

These numbers do not equal 100% as there is a 1% of revenue that is gathered in interest.

General Operating and Multi-Year Grants

General Operating 95%

Multi-Year Grants 75%

Team Growth

As outlined in our strategic plan, a big part of activating our constellation of Fellows and telling our story is hiring our first Director of Communications and Narrative Strategy. Christina Córdova-Herrera began in October 2023 and has been instrumental in thinking through our narrative strategy, outlining our goals to connect with our constellation of Fellows and sharing our impact.



Looking Ahead

As we move forward, our commitment to equity in Chicago remains resolute. We are dedicated to amplifying our efforts, forging new partnerships, and leveraging innovative strategies to create lasting change and build a more equitable city.

Thank you!

We extend our deepest gratitude to our supporters, donors, partners, volunteers, and the Chicago community for their unwavering support. Your commitment has been instrumental in driving our mission forward.

Institutional Funders

- Institutional Funders
- Albert Pick, Jr. Fund
- Field Foundation of Illinois
- John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
- JP Morgan Chase Foundation
- Julian Grace Foundation
- Paul M. Angell Family Foundation
- Polk Bros. Foundation
- Square One Foundation
- The Chicago Community Trust
- Tides Foundation
- Walder Foundation
- Woods Fund Chicago