



Request for Proposals (RFP)

Consultant Facilitator For the Chicago Creative Placekeeping Funders Cohort

Proposal Deadline: April 17, 2026

Project Start Date: May 25, 2026

1. Introduction

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation seeks to launch a collaborative learning initiative designed to strengthen community-centered cultural stewardship, advance equitable economic development, and align philanthropic strategies that support creative placekeeping across Chicago's neighborhoods. The proposed **Chicago Creative Placekeeping Funders Cohort** may include a variety of Chicago funders with a history of engagement in arts and culture and creative placekeeping specifically.

To support this effort, the MacArthur Foundation is seeking a Consultant (an individual or firm) with deep expertise in creative placekeeping, cultural strategy, and neighborhood-based economic development to lead a one-year planning, research, and convening process beginning **May 25**.

2. Project Overview

The Chicago Creative Placekeeping Funders Cohort is a new cross-funder collaboration focused on:

- Peer learning and field alignment across foundations;
- Landscape assessment of placekeeping practices and needs across Chicago;

- Strengthening technical assistance supports for artists, cultural practitioners, and grassroots organizations;
- Planning for potential co-funded pilot projects;
- Exploring the design of a **pooled grantmaking fund** that augments the MacArthur-led placekeeping [regranting partnership](#); and
- Preparing the philanthropic community for increased demand tied to the **2026 American Semiquincentennial** and the rise in community-centered cultural expression citywide.

The Consultant will design and facilitate the process that generates shared knowledge, common frameworks, and actionable recommendations.

3. Scope of Work

The selected Consultant will be responsible for the following activities within **Year 1**:

A. Project Management & Facilitation (15 hours)

- Lead planning and facilitation of **four quarterly convenings** of the funders cohort;
- Prepare agendas, meeting materials, presentations, and post-meeting summaries;
- Facilitate discussions that balance strategy, learning, and decision making; and
- Coordinate optional site visits or virtual engagements with selected community partners.

B. Landscape Research & Synthesis (35 hours)

- Conduct a **desk review** of each foundation's strategies, portfolios, and prior work related to creative placekeeping and cultural development;
- Analyze trends, strengths, gaps, and alignment opportunities across funders; and
- Produce a **Chicago Creative Placekeeping Landscape Brief** summarizing key insights.

C. Stakeholder Interviews (70 hours)

- Conduct up to 20 **interviews** with:
 - Participating Foundations;
 - Artists, culture bearers, and creative practitioners;
 - Community-based organizations leading placekeeping work;
 - Technical assistance providers (such as those that assist with permitting, fabrication, insurance/risk, equitable transit-oriented development [ETOD] alignment, evaluation, and/or community engagement); and
 - Intermediary organizations with relevant expertise.

- Produce an **Interview Synthesis Report** outlining opportunities, gaps, and practitioner needs.

D. Technical Assistance Mapping (10 hours)

- Develop a comprehensive **Technical Assistance (TA) Map** of existing providers;
- Identify service gaps, capacity bottlenecks, and opportunities for coordinated TA investment; and
- Provide recommendations for a sustainable, cross-funder TA strategy.

E. America250 (Semiquincentennial) Readiness (20-30 hours)

- Track local and national America250-related opportunities;
- Identify key cultural expression needs and opportunities for Chicago neighborhoods; and
- Produce an **America250 Opportunity Digest** and advise funders on coordinated philanthropic responses.

F. Pilot Project Development (10 hours)

- Identify and scope **1–2 early co-funding pilot opportunities**;
- Draft concise project briefs that include goals, partners, resource requirements, and timelines; and
- Support funders in assessing feasibility and readiness.

G. Shared Outcomes & Measurement Framework (10 hours)

- Develop a **shared outcomes framework** for placekeeping investments;
- Align outcomes with field best practices (cultural continuity, economic vitality, community power, anti-displacement); and
- Provide templates or tools for funder use.

H. Pooled Fund Options Design (10-15 hours)

- Produce a **Pooled Fund Options Memo** outlining potential structures, governance models, grant categories, and equity considerations; and
- Facilitate funder discussion on next steps toward pooled fund implementation in Year 2.

I. Final Deliverables

By the end of the contract period, the Consultant will produce:

1. Chicago Creative Placekeeping Landscape Brief including:

1. Pilot Projects descriptions;
 2. Foundations working in the space;
 2. Interview Synthesis Report;
 3. Technical Assistance Map;
 4. America250 Opportunity Digest (updated quarterly);
 5. Shared Outcomes & Measurement Framework;
 6. Pooled Fund Options Consideration Memo;
 7. Year-End Synthesis Report; and
 8. Proposed Year 2 workplan.
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4. Required Qualifications

The ideal Consultant or Consulting Team will have:

Experience & Expertise

- Demonstrated experience in **creative placekeeping**, cultural strategy, or arts-based community development;
- Strong understanding of **neighborhood economic development**, working closely by and with communities, especially in communities most affected by structural racism, discrimination or disinvestment;
- History of **engagement with artists, cultural practitioners, and grassroots organizations;** and
- Understanding of Chicago's civic, cultural, or philanthropic landscape (preferred but not required).

Skills

- Excellent facilitation skills across diverse stakeholder groups;
- Strong research, analysis, and synthesis skills;
- Ability to produce high-quality written materials and visual frameworks;
- Project management capacity to deliver on multiple streams of work simultaneously; and
- Cultural competency, humility, and community-centered values.

Structure

- May be an individual consultant or a consulting firm;
- If applying as a team, proposals should outline roles, responsibilities, and relevant experience of all team members.

5. Proposal Requirements

Applicants must submit a proposal that includes:

1. **Cover Letter**
 - Introduction to the consultant/team
 - Summary of approach and alignment with placekeeping values
2. **Project Approach & Methodology**
 - Description of your approach to facilitation
 - Proposed methodology for research, interviews, and synthesis
 - Strategies for ensuring community-informed and equitable practices
3. **Workplan & Timeline**
 - High-level calendar aligned with the May 15, 2026 start date
 - Staffing plan and allocation of effort
4. **Qualifications & Experience**
 - Description of relevant experience with similar initiatives
 - Short bios or résumés for key personnel
 - Three examples of similar work or engagements
5. **Budget**
 - Detailed, itemized budget for the full project year
 - Hourly or daily rates, if applicable
 - Any assumptions or optional add-ons
6. **References**
 - Contact information for 2–3 professional references
 - At least one reference should be from a philanthropic or cultural sector client

6. Award Amount

The funders anticipate a contract in the range of:

\$40,000 – \$50,000 for the full scope of work, inclusive of all fees, travel, materials, and subcontractors.

7. Submission Instructions

Proposals should be submitted electronically in PDF format to:

vitalcommunities@macfound.org

Deadline: April 17, 2026 at 11:59 PM CT

Late or incomplete proposals may not be considered.

8. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- **Depth of expertise** in creative placekeeping and equitable development
- **Quality of proposed methodology** and alignment with cohort values
- **Strength of facilitation and research capabilities**
- **Experience working with multi-stakeholder philanthropic groups**
- **Feasibility and clarity of the workplan**
- **Overall value and budget alignment**

Selected applicants may be invited for interviews before final selection.

9. Timeline

Milestone	Date
Proposal Deadline	April 17, 2026
Consultant Selection	April 24, 2026
Contracting Completed	May 22, 2026
Project Begins	May 25, 2026
Year 1 Completion	May 25, 2027

10. Contact for Questions

Questions about this RFP may be submitted to:

VitalCommunities@macfound.org

Questions must be received by *April 15, 2026*