



10 Years of **Community Progress Makers**

Citi Foundation



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Letter from the President of the Citi Foundation

In 2015, the Citi Foundation launched the Community Progress Makers initiative to support innovative organizations working to connect low-income communities to greater economic opportunity across the U.S.

Community Progress Makers began with a \$20 million investment across Greater Chicago, Greater New York City, Greater Washington D.C., Northern California, Southern California and South Florida. For the past decade, we have continued to reinforce our support for these local communities. As of 2025, the Citi Foundation has committed \$115 million to 150 local organizations through this initiative. As we recognize the 10th anniversary of Community Progress Makers, we reflect on our key takeaways from a decade of this work.

First, in order to generate lasting progress and impact, the nonprofits serving communities locally must be strong and resilient.

When we began to conceptualize Community Progress Makers, we surveyed nonprofits about their needs and challenges. A consistent response was that community organizations valued multi-year operating support for growth and capacity. Drawing on these inputs, we designed Community Progress Makers around this model of operating support committed over several years.

This type of funding means that dollars are not tied to projects and organizations can flexibly invest in different priorities, from operational areas like human capital and digital transformation to piloting new community programs. It helps build the grantee's ecosystem and complements their program-specific funding, for meaningful change that can help lead to significant community outcomes.

Second, resources and technical assistance beyond financial commitments make a difference.

Our survey of nonprofits also revealed the need for capacity-building. We embedded technical assistance, access to national experts and researchers and a peer learning community to share best practices from the start of our initiative. This programming takes place through in-person and virtual convenings, volunteer engagements and more.

Third, being a responsive funder has led to continuous evolutions of Community Progress Makers.

Over the years, we have continued to actively solicit grantee feedback and

implement changes to help ensure that our support is responsive and impactful. For example, based on grantee inputs around the value of longer funding periods, we doubled our grant commitment in the most recent cohort and increased the programming period from two to three years. We have also evolved the resources provided as part of the learning community to the needs of each cohort.

I am inspired every day by the work of our community organizations and am proud to play a role in helping accelerate their impact. Each organization comes to the table with a steadfast commitment to their community and a deep understanding of local needs and opportunities. They are poised to combine fresh ideas and solutions with a firsthand understanding of local resources.

In this report, we seek to share how the initiative has evolved and what we have learned over the last 10 years. I hope that our work can serve as a resource for other funders as we explore ways to invest in the long-term financial health of nonprofits and the communities they serve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brandee McHale". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Brandee McHale



Community Progress Makers: A snapshot

Community Progress Makers is a Citi Foundation initiative to expand economic opportunity in low-income U.S. communities through flexible funding to nonprofit organizations.

Community Progress Makers over a decade



4 cohorts



150 local organizations



\$115M committed



6 metro areas



Affordable housing and access



Economic development



Financial health



Workforce readiness

“Multi-year, unrestricted funding remains an incredibly effective and underused way to support strong nonprofits. By trusting community organizations and affording them some breathing room, Citi Foundation puts them in

a better position to make a lasting difference in people’s lives.”



Kathleen Enright

President and CEO of Council on Foundations

A timeline of Community Progress Makers



Impact by the numbers: Highlights*

Cohort 1



85%

of grantees hired new staff using the Community Progress Makers funding to **enhance capacity**



\$3.5M+

saved from energy efficiency services



15,300+

new jobs created

Cohort 2



90%+

of grantees said they **established new initiatives or activities** to engage community members



33,800+

people provided with **job training services** or access to **workforce-readiness programs**



52,000+

people connected to **financial education**

Cohort 3



32,000+

people provided with **job training services** and/or access to **workforce development programs**



66%

of organizations said they **increased their unrestricted net assets** over the two years of the grant



2,880

people opened **new financial accounts** to preserve or build assets

*Data compiled from self-reported information provided by grantees in surveys conducted by the Urban Institute and Citi Foundation

How Community Progress Makers works

The Community Progress Makers initiative provides two-pronged support to community organizations.

First, multi-year, operating support enables grantees to serve their communities with increased flexibility and innovation.

Second, the Citi Foundation curates a robust and supportive learning community through which grantees can learn from each other, work with experts to build capacity and form partnerships to strengthen their work as economic innovators.

The next two sections dive into our approach and how grantees have leveraged the learning community.



Operating support



A learning community

“Since the initiative’s inception, Urban Institute has collaborated with Community Progress Makers grantees to enhance opportunities for every person and community. These organizations are powerful catalysts for change, and we are committed to supporting them with data-driven insights that foster

effective and sustainable solutions, improving social and economic wellbeing for all.”



Sarah Rosen Wartell

President of the Urban Institute

Our approach

Through Community Progress Makers, Citi Foundation aims to strengthen the effectiveness of community-based organizations, investing in their capacity, growth and networks. The core principle behind Community Progress Makers is that for communities to see lasting progress and positive economic impact, the organizations serving them locally need flexible investments that complement program-specific support in order to deepen and accelerate their solutions.

This is why Community Progress Makers provides multi-year, operating support to reinforce the long-term work of community organizations.

[Research](#) shows this kind of funding enables grantees to assess and determine where grant dollars are most needed and allows for innovation and emergent action.

Over the last 10 years, we have seen this funding approach, make a critical difference for community organizations when implemented alongside program-specific funding.

“Flexible funding enables community-based organizations to grow their capacity to support underserved communities and create opportunities for social and economic mobility. Time and again, Community Progress Makers have shared how Citi Foundation’s operating support gave their organization the ability to

respond to unexpected challenges, create solutions to ever-changing organizational and community needs and be more effective in achieving their mission.”



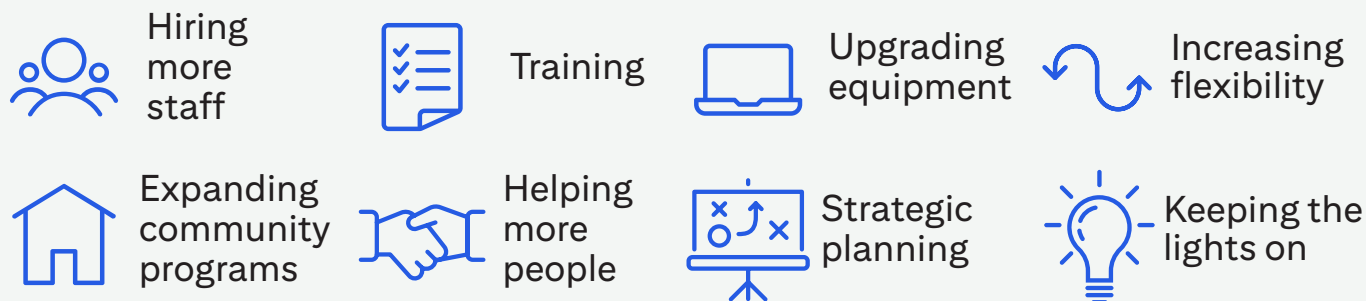
Zebradedra Hunter

*Program Officer,
Citi Foundation*

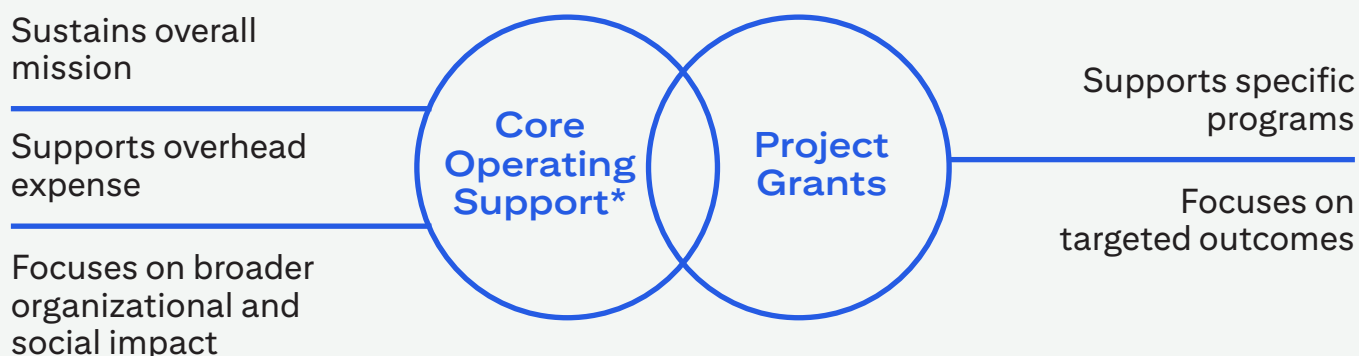


Why funding for core operating support is important to a nonprofit

What is it used for?



What exactly is it?



“We know from years of research, extensive surveys of nonprofits, and countless hours with community leaders that multi-year, general support is vital to an organization’s ability to effectively execute against their mission.

This kind of unrestricted support allows nonprofits to

focus on achieving their impact goals, rather than the fundraising hamster wheel of single-year funding or the accounting challenges of program-restricted grants.”



Phil Buchanan

President, Center for Effective Philanthropy

**also known as “unrestricted funding”*

Beyond grants: A learning community for changemakers

As part of our Community Progress Makers initiative, the Citi Foundation developed a learning community through which grantees can learn from each other, work with experts to build capacity and form partnerships to strengthen their work as economic innovators. It is designed by and for our grantees and includes technical assistance, convenings, webinars, an alumni network and access to Citi employee volunteers. We believe what makes Community Progress Makers catalytic is that all aspects of the initiative, from the funding approach to the learning community, are focused on supporting the scale, capacity and resilience of nonprofits at the organizational and operational level.

Importantly, the learning community has helped break down barriers and fostered collaboration between organizations working across geographies and focus areas. This kind of collaboration and peer learning has helped encourage the piloting of new ideas.

The structure of the learning community has evolved over the last decade. After the first cohort, we expanded informal networking periods during convenings, as grantees told us they found this invaluable. In the immediate aftermath of COVID-19, we pivoted our programming to all take place virtually. Since then, grantees have asked for and we have resumed many of the in-person and market-specific convenings and activities for robust networking and meeting opportunities.

“At its core, the Community Progress Makers program provides a space for us to have open and reflective conversations with grantees. Over the years, organizations have shared feedback about what works, what doesn’t and what they would like to see more of. Through our feedback loop, grantees are in the driver’s seat and are actively shaping and evolving the learning community they want to see — resulting in a

program that is more effective and targeted for both organization and community needs. This process has shown us the critical importance of remaining flexible in order to create lasting impact.”



Kenya Bryant

*Program Officer,
Citi Foundation*

Connecting the dots: Collaboration between Community Progress Makers

In Chicago, **Elevate Energy**, an organization focused on climate resilience, and **North Lawndale Employment Network**, a workforce development organization, recognized that the expanding renewables industry meant significant opportunities for collaboration. In 2024, the two organizations were part of a coalition to launch the Clean Energy Workforce Training (CEWT) program in the North Lawndale community. Participants receive solar installation training, relevant certifications as well as stipends, transportation resources, tutoring services and more. The program seeks to connect low-income workers to jobs in the clean energy industry.

In New York, the **Low Income Investment Fund (LIIF)**, a community development financial institution (CDFI) focused on affordable housing, early care and education and more, and the **Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco)**, an organization focused on affordable housing, early childhood education and youth development, family support, small business development and more, worked together during the COVID-19 pandemic. They helped local family childcare providers continue to operate and re-open their programs. As LIIF sought to provide emergency funding to family care providers across New York City, WHEDco leveraged its knowledge of local community needs and its professional network of home-based childcare businesses to help LIIF recruit and identify 100 programs that would benefit from these relief funds.

“Community Progress Makers offered LIIF an opportunity to learn, grow, and collaborate with peer organizations serving similar communities. While attending convenings and expert trainings helped LIIF grow our own capacity, supporting innovation and new program development, we simultaneously offered technical assistance to 13 fellow grantees, providing them with

guidance and support in the areas of finance, real estate and business planning. Many of these relationships grew over time, leading to ongoing partnerships and collaborations that multiplied our collective impact.”



Rachel Bluestein

*Senior Vice President and
Chief Program Officer, Low
Income Investment Fund (LIIF)*

Technical assistance

Nonprofits across the country consistently report that they need more capacity-building support, from building out financial strategies to implementing systems that help better use impact data.

To help address these needs, the Citi Foundation integrated technical assistance as a core aspect of the Community Progress Makers learning community.

We developed offerings in collaboration with expert organizations and according to

feedback we received from each cohort. At different points in the last decade, the Citi Foundation and collaborators have explored technical assistance related to topics including human-centered design, collective impact, nonprofit management, financial planning, measuring and reporting impact and communications. We believe that through targeted capacity-building support where nonprofits say they need it the most, we can help community leaders address organizational and operational challenges and improve long-term community impact.

Snapshot of technical assistance and learning offerings



Bringing together the learning community

The Citi Foundation engages an implementation organization to lead programmatic activities of the learning community, including virtual and in-person national and market-specific convenings, communications and curated webinars.



Providing technical trainings and capacity-building

National thought leaders and experts deliver technical assistance to build capacity, foster idea development and peer engagement and enhance community-based participatory methods. A key technical assistance offering is support for financial planning. Subject matter experts provide technical assistance to grantees, including financial and revenue assessments, training in financial analysis and revenue creation, earned revenue strategies, enterprise capital strategies and more.

Case studies: Technical assistance to build financial capacity

Capitalize Good and 20 Degrees are technical assistance organizations that collaborate to provide nonprofits with financial growth and resilience.

Capitalize Good helps build balance sheets and 20 Degrees assists community organizations with identifying and strengthening revenue generation.

Read more below and [here](#) how these two organizations support Community Progress Makers grantees with financial capacity-building.

Miami Workers Center (MWC) received financial and revenue assessments to identify strengths and areas for improvement. The results encouraged MWC to implement more competitive salaries and set aside reserve funds. In addition, MWC strengthened how it measures impact, so that this information can be better understood by the organization and by stakeholders. Capitalize Good and 20 Degrees supported MWC in creating a financial model.

Rising Sun received financial planning and financial modeling support as it was preparing to expand its operations, programs and increase its budget by 200% over the next several years. The model gave the organization a deeper understanding of the financial impacts of expansion and served as a risk management tool that allowed Rising Sun to assess different growth scenarios. Financial planning and revenue assessments gave Rising Sun the information needed to build out capacity at the senior level, including hiring a CFO and allocating resources to the back office as it prepared for its transformation.

Working Credit developed a strategy for optimizing resource allocation and received a financial model. The organization used this information to make internal investments and develop a strategic financial plan. With the combination of the Community Progress Makers grant in 2021 and financial technical assistance, Working Credit saw the largest increase in earned revenue and overall revenue in its history in 2023 and tripled the number of people it served by 2024.



More than philanthropy: Highlights

In addition to funding, the Citi Foundation engages Citi colleagues across the firm to deliver on our “More than Philanthropy” approach.

Throughout the year, Citi colleagues dedicate their time and knowledge to support communities and changemakers across the country including Community Progress Makers, to add value to the work and impact of these local leaders. Volunteer initiatives range from providing board service to delivering financial expertise to hands-on engagement events. We also leverage Citi’s global platforms and networks to amplify the community impact of our grantees.



Board service



Global Community Day



Expanding reach:
leveraging Citi platforms



Board service

Senior leaders at Citi serve on the board of organizations supported by the Citi Foundation's Community Progress Makers initiative, providing another important touch point to these organizations.

This includes **Erika Irish Brown, Head of Talent Management and Engagement**, who serves as the Vice-Chair of the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation's (Restoration) Board of Directors. Erika has been a dedicated Board member since 2003. Most recently, she supported the recruitment of the organization's first woman CEO in 2022 and provides oversight on Restoration's operations, programs and recruitment leveraging her financial and business expertise.

Justin Santiago, Vice President and Global Relationship Manager for Citi Commercial Bank serves on the board of Opportunity Junction, which provides support to job-seekers in Contra Costa County with training, work experience and placement. Justin leads mock interview sessions to help the organization's workforce development clients practice their skills. Justin also participates in Opportunity Junction's work with food

banks to provide meals to its clients.

Marco Chavarin, Senior Vice President, Community Investing and Development, serves on the board of Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA). He contributes his financial services knowledge and expertise to help guide MEDA's strategy and service delivery, including through business guidance, financial planning and executive oversight.

Michelle Agunloye, Vice President, U.S. Community Relations, served on the Associates Board of Ladder Up. She focused on fundraising, including planning the organization's largest fundraising event of the year and supported sponsorship efforts. Following her board service, Michelle remains engaged with Ladder Up as a volunteer tax preparer and hosts training sessions for Citi colleagues to become volunteer tax preparers.

Boris Espinoza, a Managing Director in Citi Private Bank, serves on the board of Hispanic Unity of Florida (HUF). He serves on the Strategic Planning development committee, which provides recommendations to the CEO and Board on how to increase the visibility of HUF in the community to help it achieve its long-term strategic goals for growth, including its objectives related to fundraising.

Global Community Day



Every June, Citi celebrates Global Community Day, where Citi volunteers around the world come together to give back to the communities where we live and work and help make a positive difference.

During Global Community Day, several volunteering events have been organized with Community Progress Makers grantees. For example, in 2023 and 2024, Citi volunteers engaged with **Habitat for Humanity New York City and Westchester County**, volunteering at Habitat Net Zero build sites, which include both new construction and homes undergoing rehabilitation for sale as energy-efficient, affordable homes for low-and-moderate income first-time homebuyers.



Citi volunteers also coordinated Global Community Day events with **Central City Neighborhood Partners (CCNP)** in Los Angeles to address food security, helping package and distribute groceries to approximately 1,000 clients.

In addition, Citi works closely with CCNP to lead year-round financial education and inclusion workshops, both in-person and virtual, where volunteer banking experts deliver presentations on topics such as budgeting, savings and credit.

Expanding reach: Leveraging Citi platforms

We leverage our global platforms and networks to amplify the impact and community solutions of Community Progress Makers.

We feature grantee videos and blogs on Citi and Citi Foundation channels, including [this highlight](#) of Green City Force. We also find ways to showcase grantees and help expand their reach and voice through our work with other organizations. For instance, [Citi sponsored a segment on the TODAY Show](#) in honor of National Get Smart About Credit Day that spotlighted Urban Upbound, a Community Progress Maker.

“Citi leverages firm-wide resources and expertise, from philanthropy to community solutions to employee volunteerism, to enable growth and economic progress in the communities we serve. Developing these multifaceted relationships with Community Progress Makers, who are on the frontline, allows us to better understand the community’s needs and how to effectively respond.”



Michelle A. Thornhill

Head of U.S. Community Relations, Citi

Looking forward

As we celebrate 10 years of Community Progress Makers, the Citi Foundation remains focused on innovation, catalyzing solutions and most importantly, creating positive impact in communities we serve.

That is why after three successful cohorts of Community Progress Makers, we announced the fourth cohort in September 2024 with double the grant commitment and an expanded programming period. For this latest cohort, we committed a collective \$50 million in grants to 50 community organizations, over a three-year programming period.

This expansion also reflects how we've listened closely to grantees, who told us over the years about the value of operating support, especially over longer periods of time.

The continuous evolution of Community Progress Makers reflects our dedication to local community changemakers across the U.S. and accelerating their positive impact. Through this report, we shared our key takeaways on how flexible funding and capacity-building can increase the multiplier effect of organizations to connect low-income communities to greater economic opportunity. We hope this can serve as a resource to other funders and stakeholder that aim to catalyze positive community impact, as we all continue to innovate and evolve our strategies.

“The success of Community Progress Makers has driven home the value of close collaboration between funders and grantees. The community organizations best understand where dollars need to go and funders can support with capacity building, expert resources and networks to catalyze growth. We hope that Community Progress

Makers can serve as a tested, multi-faceted model for other corporate funders seeking to strengthen the communities they serve.”



Kristen Scheyder

*Director,
Citi Foundation*

Learn more about Community
Progress Makers and follow along
for updates at citifoundation.com.

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