The Aya Initiative
Request for Proposals

Aya Initiative Description

Guided by the collective wisdom of an advisory group, the Prince Charitable Trusts’ Aya Initiative centers around the professional and personal development of Black Chicagoans who are committed to and are nourished by nature and the environment. The advisory group is composed of seven community members who personally and professionally embody and make real the goals of this Initiative. In the spirit of West African wisdom, Aya (the fern) symbolizes endurance and resourcefulness. The grants awarded through the Aya Initiative therefore seek to support Black-led and Black-serving organizations that are actively engaging Chicago neighborhoods/communities and the people who thrive in them. We want to contribute to organizations and their staff whose work is aligned with at least one of the following strategic focus areas:

- **Healing the Village:** We seek to encourage Black people to engage in self-care/soul-care practices and acquire lifelong skills while moving their bodies in and around nature. *Potential activities include but are not limited to:* archery, biking, bird watching, camping, fishing, floral arrangement, hiking, ice skating, kayaking, ceremony, running clubs, sailing, and skiing.

- **Strengthening the Village:** We seek to support activities that help Black-led and Black-serving environmental organizations and their staff to connect with opportunities, learn new things that can be shared, remain resilient, and realize their short- and long-term goals. *Potential activities include but are not limited to:* seek training or other capacity-building opportunities, host workshops, technology upgrades, mentorship, fundraising, intentional collaborations and learning cohorts.

- **Amplifying Village Voices:** We seek to foster dialogue, build bridges between Black and Brown communities, shape, uplift, and advance our narratives/porch stories, and hold our own accountable. *Potential activities include but are not limited to:* joint gatherings, informal conversations, advocacy and activism, social media efforts and strategies, print and broadcast journalism, and partnerships between individuals and organizations, and intergenerational dialogues.

- **Fostering Village Creativity/Imagination:** We seek to celebrate endeavors that envision a future in which water, land, and air nourishes instead of harms Black neighborhoods and people, transforms and transmutes past environmental trauma, and encourages the practice of environmental stewardship across the diaspora. *Potential activities include but are not limited to:* research innovative ways to increase urban agriculture, performance, art installations, comic
books with a special intersectional focus on Afrofuturism, photography exhibits, curriculum development.

### Definitions and Meaning

**Black people/Blackness**
Black people are not monolithic and represent a broad and diverse spectrum of physiological, geographical, cultural, and political traits and histories. We define Black and Blackness (the state of being Black) in overlapping ways: (1) the mix of physiological, geographical and cultural traits that defines Black people as people of African descent, many of whom were moved to specific regions in the world through the Trans-Atlantic slave trade (including continental Africans, African Americans, Afro-Caribbeans, Afro-Latinos and people of mixed ancestry who identify as being Black); (2) Black or Blackness is a political and historical reality of shared colonization and oppression at the hands of Europeans and Anglo-Americans and the resistance to this subjugation. Blackness is a political construct of survival and resistance against racialized oppression.\(^1\)

**Black-led**
Those with predominantly Black board and executive leadership, staff leadership and constituents — if relevant. “Black-led” is about the demographic makeup and racial identity of the leadership.\(^2\)

**Black-serving**
Those that serve individuals from predominately Black communities or whose total number of program participants are predominately Black.

**Built/Natural Environment**
Everything that surrounds us but also includes the built environment. This includes natural resources and healthy safe spaces that are accessible both indoors and outdoors.

**Nature**
All three-dimensional things that encompass the very essence of our beings. It existed before us and will hopefully exist in perpetuity. It is urban, gardens, trees, rivers, lakes, beaches, bees, butterflies, birds, parks, forest preserves, trails, air, water, mountains, prairies, marshes, wetlands, dirt, abiotic, biotic, and historical.

### Funding Criteria

**Types of support:** Funding can support the main mission of your organization if you are in the environment or nature arena, or new or existing programs that align with one of the four focus areas listed above.

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\(^2\) Ibid.
**Grant term and grant amounts:** Grants are for one year. An organization may only submit one request for funding per year. Grants can range in amounts of $2,500 to $7,500.

**Eligible applicants:** Organizations that are Black-led and Black-serving, responsive to and rooted in a Chicago community, and whose work aligns with at least one of the four focus areas are eligible to apply. If your organization does not have its own 501(c)3, please provide information for your fiscal agent.

**Please note:** Current Prince Charitable Trusts grant recipients are not eligible to apply.

### Application Process

Applications are due by **11:59p on February 28, 2022** and will be accepted between February 8 and February 28, 2022 through the Prince Charitable Trust’s eGrant portal. PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU WILL HAVE TO CREATE AN eGRANT ACCOUNT BEFORE SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION:

**STEP 1:** Create an eGrant account -

**STEP 2:** Once your account is created, complete the applicant information form in eGrant

**STEP 3:** In a PDF document or recorded video* that you will upload into eGrant, please provide the following information:

**Part 1: Organizational Background/Who are you?**
- Describe your programs.
- What communities do you work in primarily?
- Describe how are you black-led and black-serving.
- How does your organization connect with nature or the environment?

**Part 2: Initiative Alignment**
- In which focus areas does your mission or programs align? Please list all that apply
  - Healing the Village
  - Strengthening the Village
  - Amplifying Village Voices
  - Fostering Village Creativity/Imagination

**Part 3: Impact**
- Tell us how you envision using these funds in support of your mission or program(s)? What is your organization going to be able to accomplish with these grant funds?
- How will Black people/Black communities benefit from your organization’s use of this grant?
STEP 4: Attach or upload as prompted these additional documents:

- Copy of the current organizational budget. If applicable include a budget for the fiscal agent as well
- A photo that captures the essences of your work
- A copy of your organization’s logo

STEP 5: Review the application and hit the submit button by 11:59p on February 28, 2022

* To submit your application using video, create a PDF listing each of the Parts above followed by a link to your video response

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<td>Information session</td>
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Questions?

Please direct questions about The Aya Initiative and request for proposals to aya@princetrusts.org. If you have specific questions about eGrant, please contact Teri Fron at tfron@princetrusts.org or at 312-216-1963.