



2024-25 Community Revitalization Fellowship

Request for Applications

About the Community Revitalization Fellowship

The Community Revitalization Fellowship (CRF) is a learning opportunity to help grassroots community leaders revitalize neighborhoods struggling with serious challenges related to vacancy, abandonment, and disinvestment. Over the course of the program, fellows visit and learn from each other's communities and efforts, build stronger relationships with local leaders at home, tackle important projects, and push for positive changes in their neighborhoods.

Each cycle, CRF engages six grassroots resident leaders from three communities (eighteen people in total) for the yearlong fellowship. The program involves three cross-community learning exchanges and ongoing capacity building and mentorship from national experts and local partners.

The 2024–25 cycle of CRF will focus on helping residents lead community-based efforts to improve vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties through arts, culture, and creative placemaking.

CRF is designed as an opportunity for participating fellows to:

- **Gain knowledge** about neighborhood stabilization and revitalization strategies, tools, and systems
- **Lead** an impactful neighborhood revitalization strategy or project
- **Build connections** with other fellows within and across participating communities
- **Strengthen relationships** with local organizations, elected officials, and other local leaders
- **Increase the effectiveness** of their neighborhood interventions and advocacy

Applications are due by **5:00 PM ET on Monday, April 8, 2024**. [Apply here »](#)

About the Center for Community Progress

The Center for Community Progress helps people to transform vacant spaces into vibrant places. Since 2010, their team of experts has provided urban, suburban, and rural communities battling systemic vacancy with the policies, tools, and resources needed to address the full cycle of property revitalization. As the only national nonprofit dedicated to tackling vacant properties, Community Progress drives change by uncovering and disrupting the unjust, racist systems that perpetuate entrenched vacancy and property deterioration. Community Progress has delivered customized, expert guidance to leaders in over 300 communities and provided hundreds of hours of free educational resources as well as leadership programming to help policymakers, practitioners, and community members across the country return properties to productive use. For more information, visit communityprogress.org.

Program Eligibility

CRF is a program for communities represented by one institutional partner organization (community foundations/nonprofits/land banks) serving as lead applicant and six grass roots community leaders (individuals who live in the same community). Any community in the United States and Puerto Rico is eligible to apply for the fellowship. This includes cities, suburbs, towns, villages, and rural areas.

The lead applicant must be a local organization with in-depth knowledge of the community's neighborhood associations and resident leadership, a commitment to resident engagement, experience in community and economic development, and the willingness to serve as the institutional partner to the community's cohort of fellows.

What is Creative Placemaking?

Creative placemaking is the practice of enhancing a neighborhood's quality of life through arts, culture, and intentional community development. This practice can take varying forms including (but not limited to) temporary visual art installations, performance events, and developing permanent brick-and-mortar spaces. However, creative placemaking is about more than just creating artistic attractions. By connecting to the community's identity through arts and culture resources creative placemaking helps a community understand its history and look ahead toward a most just and inclusive future together.

Creative placemaking is a community revitalization tool with three essential components:

- **Projects are place-based:** Creative placemaking projects are always rooted in a specific place and are in service to the people who give it purpose. This includes making sure projects reflect the physical, social, and economic priorities of the community.
- **The process is community-centered:** Creative placemaking must engage residents, business owners, leaders, and other people who want a say in shaping a community's future. These projects prioritize the people who experience the place in question.
- **Projects are integrated with other strategies:** Creative placemaking always works alongside and in concert with local strategies for housing preservation and development, economic development, and resident-serving programs.

It is important that creative placemaking projects closely involve existing residents and community members in leadership and decision-making roles throughout the project's process.

In keeping with our mission, Community Progress is focused on arts, culture, and creative placemaking on problem properties. Problem properties are properties that are vacant, abandoned, deteriorated, or underutilized. While most neighborhoods have at least a few problem properties, Community Progress focuses on places where problem properties are numerous enough to have a noticeable negative impact on quality of life, safety, property values, and other aspects of a neighborhood's well-being. This is known as systemic vacancy.

Cohort Roles and Structure

Institutional Partner – Lead Applicant

The institutional partner provides support, mentorship, and logistical help to their community's cohort of fellows during the application process and, if chosen, over the course of the fellowship. Community foundations, land bank authorities, or any established 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations with experience in revitalization and a deep commitment to resident engagement are possible institutional partners.

Institutional partners must:

- Have a demonstrated commitment to addressing community and economic development challenges and ensure that residents are meaningfully engaged in or leading these efforts.
- Show an understanding of historic and present-day policies and practices related to racial inequities in land use, urban planning, and community investment.
- Demonstrate meaningful relationships with a range of local government, nonprofit, private, and philanthropic stakeholders who help shape revitalization decisions, and be willing to help strengthen relationships between fellows and these stakeholders. More information about the institutional partner role can be found under **Commitments and Expectations** on page 6.

Fellows – Grassroots Community Leaders

Each cohort of fellows should comprise of six grassroots community leaders representing a diverse range of skills and connections to the community. CRF aims to serve not just well-known community leaders, but also the “rising stars” whose volunteer work and advocacy could be elevated through participation in CRF.

Community Progress expects that most or all fellows will be engaged in their neighborhoods as volunteers, not as career professionals. Fitting in activism and volunteer work around job and family obligations is hard work, so CRF is designed to help fellows make the most out of the time they offer their communities.

Grassroots community leaders must demonstrate **current** involvement in revitalizing their neighborhood. This could include leading block clubs or neighborhood watches; leading an advocacy coalition; actively leading or participating in neighborhood service as a member of a faith; artists and designers of any artistic medium, culture bearers, members of arts and culture organizations utilizing vacant properties as part of their practice; or other formal and informal associations that involve revitalization work.

For communities with a substantial population, it is likely more appropriate to bring together a cohort from just one or two neighborhoods. But for communities with a smaller population, it may be appropriate to bring together a cohort of community leaders from across many different neighborhoods.

Program Structure and Timeline

CRF is an eighteen-month-long program beginning in mid-2024. During the fellowship, participants will join three in-person learning exchanges and four local cohort meetings. More information about these events is below.

Learning Exchanges

When:	<p>One (1) two-day learning exchange will take place in each of the cohort communities for a total of three (3) learning exchanges over the course of CRF. The tentative dates for the learning exchanges are:</p> <p>Exchange #1: August 1-3, 2024 (alternate dates: August 8-10)</p> <p>Exchange #2: March 13-15, 2025 (alternate dates: March 27-29)</p> <p>Exchange #3: May 15-17, 2025 (alternate dates: May 1-3)</p>
Coordinator:	Center for Community Progress
Additional Support:	Hosting fellowship cohort and community
Attendees:	All Fellows and Institutional Partners
What:	The learning exchanges feature technical and leadership trainings led by national experts and local neighborhood tours of projects in the host community.

Local Cohort Meetings

When:	Before the first learning exchange, and after each of the three learning exchanges (four times in total over the course of the fellowship)
Coordinator:	Institutional partner
Additional Support:	Fellows in in Local Cohort
Attendees:	All Fellows and Institutional Partners
What:	These meetings are intended to help fellows set and make progress toward goals and continue the momentum generated during the learning exchanges.
Additional Details:	The institutional partner has the option of using the funding (described below) to support these meetings, as needed.

Tuition and Cost

Thanks to the generous support of The Kresge Foundation, institutional partners and fellows are not responsible for any direct financial costs of participating in CRF. All travel, lodging, and on-site meal expenses associated with each learning exchange are covered for all fellows and one representative from the institutional partner.

In addition:

- Each fellow will receive a \$250 stipend after attending each learning exchange (\$750 in total over the course of CRF).
- The institutional partner will receive \$14,000 in funding to support its participation in CRF.
 - The institutional partner can use \$4,000 to reimburse for time spent on providing guidance, mentorship, and logistical support to the cohort. This will be provided in three equal installments, after the completion of each learning exchange.
 - The remaining \$10,000 should be used to support fellows-led arts, culture, and creative placemaking activities on problem properties. The description for how to use of these funds is intentionally broad and flexible because we know different communities have varying and specific needs. However, we ask that institutional partners share their ideas for how these funds can best support the goals of this program in the application. This will be provided at the conclusion of the program.

In exchange, institutional partners and fellows are expected to commit the time necessary to full participation in CRF.

Full Program Timeline

Exact dates and times will be determined in partnership with selected communities:

- **June 2024:** First local cohort meeting in each community
- **August 1-3, 2024:** Learning Exchange #1
- **October 9-11, 2024:** Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference
- **January 2025:** Second local cohort meeting in each community
- **March 13-15, 2025:** Learning Exchange #2
- **April 2025:** Third local cohort meeting in each community
- **May 15-17, 2025:** Learning Exchange #3
- **Beyond June 2025:** Periodic follow up with fellows and institutional partners from Community Progress to learn about the impact of CRF in participating communities.

Alternative Learning Exchange Dates

Alternative dates for each of the learning exchange are tentatively planned and listed at the beginning of this section under “Learning Exchanges.” Community Progress will work with selected cohorts to finalize the learning exchange dates.

Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference

As part of the fellowship, participants will also be invited to attend [Community Progress' Reclaiming Vacant Properties Conference](#). The conference brings together leaders in various revitalization sectors from across the country and focuses on positioning community leaders to radically imagine and create a future that centers equitable development and community resiliency. Community Progress will provide scholarships to attend the conference free of charge, cover the cost of lodging during the conference, and provide stipends for travel.

Commitments and Expectations

Commitments and Expectations for Institutional Partners

- **Convene the six local fellows four times in total over the course of the fellowship.** These convenings should happen once before the first learning exchange and again after each of the three learning exchanges. The structure of these meetings is flexible and could include a meeting to debrief from a learning exchange and plan next steps, a meet-and-greet with relevant local government or other partners, helping at a neighborhood clean-up, or other formats that meets the community's and fellows' needs.
- **Participate fully in three (3) two-day learning exchanges over the course of the fellowship.** Two of the learning exchanges will involve traveling to each of the other two cohort communities. The third learning exchange will take place in the institutional partner's own community.
- **Help identify and implement strategies to strengthen relationships between fellows and local government, nonprofit, private, or philanthropic leaders.** This may include navigating local bureaucracies and, where appropriate, helping advance the fellows' use of arts, culture, and creative placemaking as a tool for neighborhood revitalization efforts that emerge through participation in CRF.
- **Participate in periodic follow-up surveys and/or phone calls.** This is expected during CRF and for a period of up to twelve months following the program's formal conclusion to document the program's impact.
- **Comply with any health and safety related protocols (e.g. COVID-19) in effect while participating in learning exchanges.**

Commitments and Expectations for Fellows

- **Participate fully in three (3) two-day learning exchanges over the course of the fellowship.** Two of the learning exchanges will involve traveling to each of the other two cohort communities. The third learning exchange will take place in the fellow's own community.
- **Participate in four local meetings organized by the institutional partners.**

- **Participate in periodic follow-up surveys and/or phone calls.** This is expected during CRF and for a period of up to twelve months following the program's formal conclusion to document the program's impact. Our hope is that this program will help residents take on new policy initiatives and implement new creative placemaking revitalization projects in their neighborhoods to improve vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties.
- **Comply with any health and safety related protocols (e.g. COVID-19) in effect while participating in learning exchanges.**

What's Involved in Hosting a Learning Exchange?

Over the course of the fellowship, each cohort will host the other two cohort communities for one (1) two-day learning exchange. Each exchange will include a neighborhood tour highlighting relevant projects.

To ensure the learning exchanges and the workshop have a positive impact, each cohort is expected to:

- Help secure event space(s) for the learning exchanges
- Help secure audio/visual equipment
- Identify potential local community leaders, advocates, government officials, or elected leaders who play an important role in vacant property revitalization and who can provide community context during the learning exchange and/or workshop
- Recommend and/or connect Community Progress with local vendors including food, hotel, and local transportation to neighborhood sites

The Role of the Center for Community Progress

Community Progress offers the Community Revitalization Fellowship thanks to the generous support of The Kresge Foundation. Our role includes:

- Managing the planning and development of each learning exchange in partnership with each hosting community
- Providing a faculty of national experts and local practitioners from around the country to guide participants through a mix of classroom sessions and small working group activities at each of the three learning exchanges
- Providing ongoing informal support and guidance to institutional partners and fellows over the course of the fellowship
- Arranging travel, lodging, and on-site meals for fellows for each learning exchange
- Providing stipends to fellows and funding to institutional partners as described in **Program Structure and Timeline** on page 4

Application Schedule

Task	Date
Application Release	March 12, 2024
Informational Webinar	Thursday, March 21, 2024 at 12:00 PM ET
Applications Due	Monday, April 8, 2024 by 5:00 PM ET
All Applicants Notified	By May 14, 2024
Participant Preparation	May–June 2024
Program Implementation	July 2024–May 2025

Selection Criteria

Community Progress will evaluate applications on the following criteria:

- Evidence that property vacancy, abandonment, and deterioration are a significant challenge to the community. Priority will be given to communities where this most directly impacts people of color.
- The institutional partner has an existing relationship with government, civic, and resident leaders that can be built upon over the course of the fellowship, and experience with resident engagement and racial equity in the context of community and economic development.
- The proposed fellows have experience in community-driven interventions and/or advocacy to address vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties through arts, culture, and creative placemaking.
- The applicant has the commitment and ability to meet expectations for participation and project implementation.

Informational Webinar

All organizations and individuals who are considering applying for the 2024-2025 Community Revitalization Fellowship are invited to join an informational webinar on **Thursday, March 21, 2024 at 12:00 PM ET**. The webinar is optional, and registration is required. [Register here »](#)

How to Submit Your Application

Applications should be a single PDF and should [submitted via this form](#). The full application begins on page 9. Applications are due on **Monday, April 8, 2024, at 5:00 PM ET**. *Incomplete and late applications will not be considered.*

Thank you for your interest in the 2024-2025 Community Revitalization Fellowship. We look forward to reviewing your application. If you have additional questions regarding this opportunity, visit our [FAQs page](#) or email crf@communityprogress.org.

2024-2025 Community Revitalization Fellowship Application

Application Checklist

- Cover Sheet
- Institutional Partner Questionnaire
- Six (6) Fellows Questionnaires
- Responses to Narrative Questions
- Optional Supplemental Materials

[Download a Microsoft Word version of the application here »](#)

Application Cover Sheet

Complete the following cover sheet and include it at the front of your application.

Lead Applicant (Proposed Institutional Partner) Information

Lead Applicant	
Organization Type	
Website	
Mailing Address	
Executive Director	
Mission Statement	

Project Manager (staff member who will oversee CRF involvement)

Name		Email Address	
Job Title		Phone Number	

Community Information

City		State		Population	
Neighborhood(s) of Focus					

Resident Leaders (Proposed Fellows)

Name	Email Address
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

Please indicate your cohort's availability during the following dates. Indicating dates of unavailability will not disqualify your application.

	Available to Host? (Yes/No)	Available to Travel? (Yes/No)
Exchange #1: August 1-3, 2024		
Alternate Date: August 8-10, 2024		
Exchange #2: March 13-15, 2025		
Alternate Date: March 27-29, 2025		
Exchange #3: May 15-17, 2025		
Alternate Date: May 1-3, 2025		

Institutional Partner Questionnaire

This questionnaire should be completed by the lead applicant (institutional partner).

1. Please describe how your organization engages or supports residents in shaping their neighborhoods and/or effecting positive change in their communities. **[250 words]**
2. Has your organization been involved with project implementation or advocacy focused on engaging residents through arts, culture, and creative placemaking to revitalize communities? If so, please describe. **[250 words]**
3. Please describe your experience in community and economic development. Speak specifically to how that work connects to advancing racial equity. **[200 words]**
4. Please highlight two relationships you have with stakeholders from local government, nonprofit, private, or the philanthropic community who influence revitalization efforts and how you would strengthen relationships between fellows and these stakeholders. **[200 words]**

Resident Leader Questionnaire

This questionnaire should be completed by each of the six community leaders applying for the fellowship.

Name	
Email Address	

1. Please describe your current involvement in local community groups. These groups could be neighborhood associations, block clubs, arts and cultural organizations, faith institutions, or other formal or informal organizations in your community. *Example: Member, Oak Street Block Club*
2. What revitalization projects or advocacy work have you been involved with in your community? This might include creative placemaking, other arts and cultural activities, or community engagement. How does that work connect to advancing racial equity?
3. What do you hope to gain by participating in the Community Revitalization Fellowship?
4. Is there anything else you would like to share about your occupation, education, volunteer work, or life experiences that you feel makes you a strong candidate for the Community Revitalization Fellowship?

Narrative Questions

The Community Revitalization Fellowship is intended to help communities struggling with serious challenges related to vacancy, abandonment, and disinvestment. Be detailed in your responses: your answers will help us better understand your community, its challenges, and its opportunities.

1. Who and what areas of your community will be served by the Community Revitalization Fellowship? Please be specific about neighborhoods, racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups, and other relevant characteristics. **[300 words]**
2. Describe the scope of vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties in your community. Include the scale of the problem, the economic conditions, or other trends affecting your city and state, as well as how the challenges are affecting your residents. Please use data to support your description. **[300 words]**
3. If selected, your cohort will have the opportunity to lead a tour of arts, culture, and creative placemaking projects on vacant, abandoned, or underutilized properties in your community. On the tour, visiting fellows will learn from your challenges and successes, see revitalization projects, and hear from local partners. Please describe up to three arts, culture, and/or creative placemaking projects in your community that you would be excited to showcase as part of this tour. For each project, please answer the following questions:
 - a. Project title or short descriptor
 - b. Were the proposed fellows involved in the project? If so, how?
 - c. What type of problem property did the project address? (e.g., vacant lot, abandoned building, underutilized park)
 - d. What was the approximate budget?
 - e. How was the broader community engaged in the project?
 - f. How has the project impacted your community?
 - g. Did this project include any coordination or support from local government? If so, please describe that relationship.

[1,200 words – up to three additional pages of photos may be included as part of the “Optional Supplemental Materials” section of this application.]

4. Effectively addressing the challenges of vacancy and abandonment requires coordinated efforts from numerous partners and stakeholders. Describe the current partners in this work (e.g., government, residents, development companies, nonprofits, philanthropic partners) as well as the nature of the collaboration. Please describe the institutional partner and/or proposed fellows’ relationships with these stakeholders. **[300 words.]**
5. If selected, the institutional partner will receive \$14,000 in funding as described in “Program Structure and Timeline” above. The institutional partner can use \$4,000 to reimburse for time spent on providing guidance, mentorship, and logistical support to the cohort. The remaining \$10,000 should be used on a project to support arts, culture, and creative placemaking on problem properties. Please describe the decision-making process you will employ to determine the use of the funding, and existing ideas or need for this funding, if any. **[250 words]**
6. How will you ensure there is sustained active engagement among fellows throughout the fellowship and after the program concludes? **[150 words]**

Optional Supplementary Materials

Applicants may include additional attachments (including photos, data summaries, maps, reports, relevant policies, and news articles) to help the fellowship selection team better understand the challenges and opportunities in your community. This section is limited to a maximum of ten pages and must be a part of the application PDF.