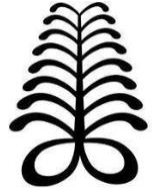# The Aya Initiative
## Request for Proposals (RFP)
## 2024 Overview

| BACKGROUND/FOCUS AREAS |
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Guided by the collective wisdom of an advisory group, the Prince Charitable Trusts' Aya Initiative seeks to support Black-led and Black-serving organizations that are actively engaging Chicago neighborhoods/communities and the people who thrive in them around nature and the environment. The advisory group is composed of eight 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. We want to contribute to organizations and their staff that are committed to and nourished by nature and the environment; and 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, outside sports*, *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: seeking training or other capacity-building opportunities, hosting 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 advance or advocate for policy changes that bring communities together to advocate for resources and advance projects related to nature and the environment. *Potential activities include but are not limited to: neighborhood beautification projects, community gardens, joint gatherings, informal conversations, signing and translations for the hearing impaired or non-native speakers, advocacy and activism, social media efforts and strategies, print and broadcast journalism, partnerships between individuals and organizations, intergenerational dialogues, and policy or community organizing campaigns.*

- **Fostering Village Creativity/Imagination**: We seek to celebrate endeavors that envision a future in which water, land, and air nourish instead of harm 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, graphic novels with a special intersectional focus on Afrofuturism[1], photography exhibits, curriculum development.*

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[1] Defined by the Webster Dictionary as, "a movement in literature, music, art, etc., featuring futuristic or science fiction themes which incorporate elements of Black history and culture."

## DEFINITIONS

**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.[2]

**Black-led**
Organizations with a Black Executive Director and a predominantly Black board, staff leadership and constituents — if relevant. "Black-led" is about the demographic makeup and racial identity of the leadership.[3]

**Black-serving**
Those that serve individuals from predominantly 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, soil, abiotic, biotic, and historical.

**Environmental Organization**
Organizations that seek to protect, monitor, advocate for, or provide access to the built/natural environment or nature. These organizations might also work to ensure that people and communities of color are not disproportionately impacted by exposure to pollution and toxins, lack of access to clean water and air, or inadequate waste management.

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[2] Black Social Change Funders Network. (2017). *The Case for Funding Black-led Social Change*.
[3] Ibid.

## FUNDING CRITERIA

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

**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.

## ELIGIBILITY

**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. Previous and current fiscal year organizational budgets must be less than $850,000. If your organization does not have its own 501(c)3, please provide information for your fiscal sponsor.

**Please note:** Current Aya Initiative grantees are eligible to apply for another grant; however, please know that this is a competitive process and renewed funding cannot be guaranteed. Grant recipients in Prince Charitable Trusts' other grants programs are not eligible to apply.

## HOW TO APPLY

Step 1:Go to goapply2.akoyago.com/prince to create a GOapply Account. You will need an EIN (TAX ID) number to register. If you have a fiscal sponsor, the account will need to be created using their EIN number and organization information.

If you have an existing GOapply account from a previous application with Aya or another organization, you can login using the same link listed above. You will have an opportunity to review and update organizational information from your previous application.

Step 2: Gather the following documents as you will need them to either answer a question or to upload them with your application in GOapply:

- Current organizational budget (revenue and expenses)
- Previous year organizational budget (revenue and expenses)
- Program budget (revenue and expenses) if applicable
- A photo that captures the essence of your organization or its programs (jpeg)

Step 3: If you are applying with the assistance of a fiscal sponsor **(Fiscal Sponsorship\*),** please know that the organization acting as fiscal sponsor must submit the application and we will need documentation confirming the fiscal

sponsorship arrangement between them and your organization as the sponsored project/organization. For more details, see the application itself or email aya@princetrusts.org.

*A fiscal sponsorship relationship confers the sponsor's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status and certain administrative benefits onto a charitable project so that it can receive grants and tax-deductible contributions that it would otherwise be unable to receive.

Step 4: In GOapply, please be prepared to offer the following details:

**<u>Organization Information</u>**
Organization's address and phone number, if applicable
Website, optional
Facebook, optional
Instagram, optional
LinkedIn, optional
Name and contact information for the organization's Executive Director/CEO
What is the organization's anticipated revenue for the current fiscal year?
What are the organization's anticipated expenses for the current fiscal year?
If this grant will be used solely for a program, what are the anticipated revenue and expenses for the program?

**<u>Grant Contact Information</u>**
Name, title, phone number, and email address for the person who is the primary contact for this grant proposal.

**<u>Request for support</u>**

Tell us how this request relates to nature and/or the environment (see definition section for more details, if necessary).

Are you seeking general operating support or program support?

Select the focus area that best aligns with your organization or the project you are applying for: Healing the Village, Strengthening the Village, Amplifying Village Voices, Fostering Village Creativity/Imagination --see Background/Focus Areas Section of the RFP for more details about each focus area. How does the focus area you selected align with your mission/programs?

What is the grant amount you are seeking?

In the online portal, in a separate pdf (3 pages or less), or in a video (no longer than 5 minutes), please provide your answers to the following questions:

- Tell us about your organization (your mission, history, and programs). If you are applying for support of a specific program/project, please describe
- Based on what is outlined in the definitions section of this RFP how is your organization Black-led and Black-serving? (Please refer to the definition section for more clarity if needed)
- How will this grant benefit the audience/constituencies your organization serves?

- What are you hoping this grant will help your organization accomplish?

| TIMELINE | |
|---|---|
| | **DATE** |
| RFP released | January 19, 2024 |
| Application submissions accepted | January 23, 2024 through March 1, 2024 |
| Information session | January 31, 2024*, Noon*<br>*Information Session Registration Link* |
| Office hours | February 22, 2024: 9am-10am and 2pm-3:30pm and February 27, 2024: 11am -12pm and 2pm-3pm<br>*Link to Schedule Office Hours* |
| Application submission deadline | March 1, 2024, at 5pm |
| Funding decision notification | April 2024 |
| Grants distributed | May 2024 |
| Grant reports due | January 31, 2025 |

Please feel free to email aya@princetrusts.org if you have questions or require assistance.

For more information about Frequently Asked Questions, please refer to the Aya Initiative FAQ section at: https://princetrusts.org/aya-initiative/