



# Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 26-0523, **Version:** 1

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### **PROPOSED RESOLUTION**

#### **SUPPORT FOR THE INNOVATION NEXUS OF THE CHICAGOLAND WORKFORCE FUNDERS ALLIANCE**

**WHEREAS** the Cook County Policy Roadmap 2024-2027, includes a key objective under Vital Communities to invest in economic sectors with good jobs and positive economic, environmental, and social impact; and

**WHEREAS** the Cook County Equity Task Force Report includes a recommendation to “Align Cook County’s workforce investment intentionally and strategically to support high quality jobs that promote residents’ economic mobility and equity”; and

**WHEREAS** the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development’s (BED) 2025 Strategic Plan builds upon the recommendations of the Policy Roadmap and the Equity Task Force and recommends that BED meets the talent needs of employers in key sectors to increase opportunities for, and access to good jobs; and

**WHEREAS** BED has a commitment to talent driven economic development which includes supporting industry-led partnerships to meet the talent needs of employers and to ensure that residents have opportunities for good jobs; and

**WHEREAS**, to achieve the above objectives the BED partners with and collaborates with the Chicagoland Workforce Funders Alliance (CWFA);

**WHEREAS**, since 2012, the CWFA has engaged over 30 philanthropic and corporate funders to advance an equitable and prosperous Chicagoland built by employer, worker and community collaborations; and

**WHEREAS** the Funder Alliance has used this role to carve out a unique position at the intersection of workforce development, social justice, education and economic development; and

**WHEREAS** Forefront, Illinois’ statewide association, founded in 1974, representing nonprofits and grant makers, as well as their advisors and allies serves as a trusted resource and leader committed to educating, unifying, and mobilizing the sector in Illinois; serves as a Fiscal Agent for the CWFA ; and

**WHEREAS** the CWFA launched the Innovation Nexus in 2023 to bring together the workforce, business and career education ecosystems to create innovative, tech-driven solutions for address shared challenges; and

**WHEREAS** the CWFA and the Innovation Nexus link sector-based partnerships around shared workforce challenges and provides access to tools and resources to assist employers address their talent needs; and

**WHEREAS** the Innovation Nexus’ portfolio includes Career Pathways.net which is free and open online directory of post-secondary career training opportunities utilized by the Chicago Public Schools; and

**WHEREAS** in 2026 and 2027, the Innovation Nexus will prioritize expansion of this resource into suburban Cook school districts; and

**WHEREAS** given the reduced federal funding for workforce and talent solutions, the Innovation Nexus will provide

BED with consulting and advisory services to support our work with key sectors, and promotion of good jobs; and

**WHEREAS** given the US Department of Energy's termination of \$1.1 million solar installation grant to Cook County, Innovation Nexus and NEWs will provide support to BED to develop and support the Solar Synergy Advisory Committee in 2026 and 2027; and

**WHEREAS**, Cook County will continue to support as a lead sponsor, the annual sold out, standing room only, Chicagoland Workforce Symposium, which attracts over 275 workforce practitioners from over 200 organizations to learn about best practices and opportunities for collaboration and partnership; and

**WHEREAS** providing BED and employers with new and improved channels to meet their talent needs, coupled with the development of resources to promote and share existing career pathway opportunities to both employers and job seekers will assist all parties; and

**WHEREAS** the BED will develop a detailed scope of work that outlines deliverables, establishes reporting requirements with mutually agreed upon metrics; and

**WHEREAS** the BED's FY26 budget includes \$150,000 to compensate the CWFA / Innovation Nexus for these services through payment to Forefront as Fiscal Agent; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Cook County Board of Commissioners does hereby authorize the Bureau Chief of the Bureau of Economic Development to enter into a two-year agreement for \$150,000 to with Forefront as fiscal agent, for CWFA / the Innovation Nexus to support BED's strategies related to talent solutions and advances Cook County's policy objectives as outlined in the Policy Roadmap and the Equity Task Force Report.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the Cook County Board of Commissioners further authorizes the Bureau Chief of BED or its designee to modify the agreement and funding amount based upon need, performance, and utilization, subject to annual appropriation by the Board.