



SURGE FELLOWSHIP CHICAGO

2025 Application Guide

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surge fellowship mission

Culturally and community responsive leaders of color in education matter now more than ever

We know the wellness and thriving of our youth, families and communities remains critical, and culturally and community responsive leadership matters more than ever. As we've all seen, the COVID pandemic has had a devastating impact in communities of color, and our nation needs leaders of color who are leading for racial equity in our schools, organizations and communities. At Surge, we continue to be focused on supporting leaders of color to be well and to lead transformative change during these challenging times.

The Chicago Surge Fellowship is the flagship, signature program of the Surge Institute. The fellowship is a best in-class, 10-month program for emerging leaders of color in education. For this program, the Surge Institute identifies and supports promising education leaders of color to go on a collective journey that centers freedom dreaming, learning about and loving themselves, knowing the landscape of our city and educational system, and cultivating their leadership abilities and skills.

As a result of the Surge Fellowship experience, ninety-four percent of Chicago alumni report having a clear purpose and vision as a transformational leader. Furthermore, ninety-eight percent of Chicago alumni have gained personal confidence defined as being knowledgeable about how their personal strengths can support their work, increasing confidence in their leadership skills, gaining the ability to disrupt inequitable systems, and being comfortable with their identity. Finally, eighty-eight percent of Chicago alumni report they have gained an increase in responsibility in their daily careers.

Ultimately, Surge Fellows consistently leave this experience having enhanced their competency in both technical and adaptive leadership skills, including relationship cultivation, collaboration, problem-solving, negotiation, communication, design thinking, and project management. Surge Fellows also gain a deeper understanding of the sociopolitical and economic context, history and structure of public education. And, importantly, Surge Fellows rediscover themselves, their power and their dreams, and become a part of a community of leaders who see, support and affirm each other.

fellowship description

The 2024 Chicago Surge Fellowship will empower a cohort of 15-18 promising African-American and Latine/x education leaders to transform the education ecosystem.

The 2025 Surge Fellowship experience will be a 10-month journey of individual leadership development, racial healing, kinship building, and collective transformation and movement-building. Our curriculum integrates visioning, self-assessment, and goal-setting, deepening historical and critical analysis of education policy and practice, and leadership skill-building. Our monthly sessions incorporate a variety of learning modalities, including case studies, problem-solving scenarios, text-based discussions, project design, and presentations. In addition to monthly sessions, Fellows engage in a full year of leadership coaching as well as two 360-degree feedback review cycles. Our programming is grounded in a vision of culturally and community-responsive leadership and community-responsive wellness, with the aim of building Fellows' capacities to lead collectively toward greater equity, justice, and liberation.

Candidates for the Chicago Surge Fellowship are African American or Latine/x education leaders who are passionate about serving communities of color. Strong fit candidates have earned a Bachelor's degree, have six or more years of work experience, and must be in an education or youth-serving role at the time they begin the fellowship. We are looking for candidates who have a desire to impact transformational change in educational systems, have a racial equity lens, are self-aware, have experience leading through complexity, and have demonstrated an ability to make an impact, among other characteristics, skillsets, and mindsets. Finally, Surge Fellows experience a rigorous and time-intensive program while also receiving hands-on and loving support along the way. We encourage applicants to apply when they can be fully present and invest deeply to gain the full benefits of the experience.

Recent Surge Fellows speak most powerfully about their experience and its impact on their lives:

"I entered the fellowship with imposter syndrome, and engaging with my brothers and sisters in the fellowship, humanized "leadership" a bit more. I think my view on leadership has shifted from having a certain title or status to one about the impact that one makes and the heart of the leader. The fellowship has helped me to be more confident in expressing my vision for my community and myself. The fellowship has also helped me to realize that the education world is small and that we need to do away with the crabs in a barrel way of being and connect our resources."

-2022 Surge Fellow

"At the start of my experience with Surge, I was feeling defeated. I can't fully capture it, but I am sensing a shift within myself in the way I am showing up for myself and, therefore, others. I am learning so much in Surge and being able to practice centering wellness in the spaces that I am in. I see the shift for myself but also those who are in community with me."

-2023 Surge Fellow

"Surge days are days that I absolutely look forward to each month. They breathe life into me."

-2024 Fellows

"I am proud to be a part of an organization that encourages civic engagement, cultural awareness, and collective action. I truly feel that I am a part of something much bigger than myself, and I am thankful to be a part of the Surge." -2024 Fellow

program schedule

The Surge Fellowship is a holistic experience that addresses the head, heart, and soul of leadership.

The fellowship begins in October 2024 and concludes in July 2025. It kicks off with a two-and-a-half-day opening retreat and culminates in a two-and-a-half-day closing retreat and graduation celebration. From November 2024 through June 2025, the fellowship cohort participates in monthly full-day in-person sessions from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Fellows are expected to attend all retreats and monthly sessions, complete pre-work assignments and meet with their executive coaches twice monthly.

For the 2025 Surge Fellowship year, all sessions are planned to be in-person. COVID protocols will be in place to ensure the health and safety of all in our community- and we will follow the wisdom, needs, and risk-tolerance of our community. Our priority is the physical and psychological well-being and safety of our people.

month	themes
October 17-19, 2024*	Opening Retreat: Our Origins are Assets
November 15, 2024	Know the Landscape: Leadership in Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous Times
December 20, 2024	The Matrix: Deconstructing Racism in Education
January 24, 2025	Focus Inward: Our Voice, Our Stories, Our Power
February 21, 2025	The Matrix 2.0: Reimagining Education for Our Communities
March 21, 2025	Dream Big: Co-Imagining Liberation for Our Peoples
April 25, 2025	Survivance: Leading Change
May 23, 2025	Collective Power: Culturally and Community Responsive Leadership
June 20, 2025	Make an Impact: Our Courage to Lead
July 19-21, 2025*	Closing Retreat and Graduation: Leading Together Toward Equity, Justice and Liberation

*October 17 and July 19 programming is evening only

candidate criteria

- . African-American or Latine/x leader roughly between the ages of 28 and 40, based in the Chicagoland area for the duration of the Fellowship
- . Bachelor's degree (minimum)
- . Minimum of six years of work experience
- . Employed in education or youth-serving role (district, charter, early childhood, college and career access, higher education, workforce development, advocacy/public policy, philanthropy, government or non-profit) for the duration of the Fellowship
- . Ability to attend all sessions and participate for the duration of the program.

financial requirements

- . Sponsoring organizations are expected to pay a tuition of \$5,000 per fellow for the year-long program.
- . Limited scholarships are available for accepted candidates with financial needs. Fellows who receive a Surge scholarship must give a personal contribution of \$500.

application requirements

The application for the Surge Fellowship can be found at: surgeinstitute.org/become-a-fellow To be considered, applications must include the following:

- . Completed application, including responses to four essay questions
- . Résumé
- . Two recommendation surveys, including one from current supervisor
- . Memorandum of Understanding signed by applicant and applicant's supervisor

The deadline for application submission is **11:59 PM CDT on June 28, 2024**. The application must be completed and submitted online. Incomplete or late applications will not be considered. Contact the Surge Institute's administrative team at chicago@surgeinstitute.org with specific questions.

the surge fellowship timeline

May 1, 2024 | application is available

June 28, 2024 | applications are due (by 11:59 p.m.)

August 7-9, 2024 | selection interviews

September 2024 | cohort announced and welcome ceremony

October 2024 | opening retreat

November 2024 - June 2025 | monthly program sessions

July 2025 | closing retreat and graduation

frequently asked questions

1. WHAT IS THE CRITERIA TO BECOME A SURGE CHICAGO FELLOW?

- . African-American or Latine/x leader roughly between the ages of 28 to 40
- . Bachelor's degree (minimum)
- . Minimum of six years of work experience
- . Employed in education or youth-serving role (district, charter, advocacy/public policy, higher education, non-profit or other) for the duration of the Fellowship
- . Passion for positively impacting the lives of young people and their communities
- . In addition to the above criteria, candidates must complete the Surge application, which includes supervisor approval to participate

2. BEYOND THE CRITERIA LISTED ABOVE, WHAT MORE CAN YOU SHARE ABOUT THE IDEAL SURGE FELLOWSHIP CANDIDATE?

The selection process for Surge Fellows, and the curation of a cohort, is both science and art, and there are a number of considerations involved. Beyond the baseline qualifications shared above, there are other qualities and characteristics ideal Surge Fellowship candidates embody. The following are some of the core beliefs, qualities and characteristics we look for:

- . This movement starts and ends with an unwavering belief in the brilliance and genius of BIPOC young people. Anyone who thinks our youth are things that need to be fixed is probably not going to be a fit.
- . Strong Surge candidates know what they know AND what they don't know. They are low ego and high impact. They have a vision for their future and know they need additional skills to get there - and ideally they can name some of them.
- . Surge fellows (and staff and alums) have to be committed to do the work necessary to walk in the fullness of their purpose and power - shedding masks and limiting beliefs that inhibit their recognition of their inherent wholeness.
- . An understanding and belief that we are stronger together. Surge is about a community of amazing leaders, not individual superheroes. None of us can transform these intractable systems alone. A Surge Fellow needs to understand that and be fully committed to the power of the collective, while also knowing what they need from and can offer to the community.

Additionally, ideal Surge Fellowship candidates are at an inflection point in their careers and seeking a step change in their influence and impact. Regarding level in their organization, it is difficult to put specific criteria around this because each case is different, but we prioritize leaders who are no more than 2-3 levels removed from the top decision-making positions in their organizations. Examples include but are not limited to: a school leader or member of a school leadership team; non-profit manager or director; a social entrepreneur who has an established venture and strong potential to expand their impact.

3. IS THE CHICAGO SURGE FELLOWSHIP ONLY AVAILABLE TO AFRICAN AMERICAN AND LATINE/X CANDIDATES? IF SO, WHY?

Yes, the Surge Fellowship in Chicago is currently only available to African-American and Latine/x candidates. This is an intentional decision driven by the fact that close to 85% of public school students in Chicago are African-American or Latine/x, and our goal is to increase leadership representation of these large populations.

4. WHAT IS THE TUITION FEE FOR SURGE AND HOW CAN IT BE PAID?

The tuition fee is \$5,000 for the Surge Fellowship. It is expected that the fellow's organization pays the tuition fee. If the organization is unable to pay partial or full tuition, the fellow can apply for a scholarship from the Surge Institute. Scholarship recipients are required to make a personal commitment of \$500. Fellows may also pay the full tuition on their own. Tuition can be paid in two installments – one in October and the other in February.

5. HOW DOES ONE QUALIFY FOR A SURGE SCHOLARSHIP?

Qualification for a Surge scholarship award is handled on a case-by-case basis and is based on financial need. While we have been fortunate to provide scholarships to all Fellows in need to date, this is not a guarantee in the future, and we strongly encourage Fellows to request their organizations contribute as much as possible to their tuition fee, which is less than 20% of the full cost of the fellowship experience. Please note, candidates for the Fellowship are not selected based on their financial status. Candidates apply for a scholarship in the Memorandum of Understanding that is a required part of the application.

6. I HAVE A CONFLICT WITH THE SELECTION DAYS, COULD I SCHEDULE AN INTERVIEW FOR ANOTHER TIME OR PARTICIPATE VIRTUALLY?

Unfortunately, candidates must interview during one of the Selection Interview Days in order to be considered for the fellowship. This is due to the fact that the interview process includes multiple interview activities, including a small group activity. Applicants for the fellowship should make sure they are available on the designated dates.

7. WHAT IS THE TIME COMMITMENT FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE SURGE FELLOWSHIP?

The fellowship begins in October 2024 and concludes in July 2025; the dates are listed on our website. It kicks off with a two-and-a-half-day opening retreat and culminates in a two-and-a-half-day closing retreat and graduation celebration.

From November 2024 through June 2025, the fellowship cohort participates in monthly full-day in-person sessions from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Fellows are required to attend all retreats and monthly sessions in their entirety, arriving on time for each session and departing at the conclusion of the scheduled programming.

Fellows are also required to complete pre-work assignments and meet with their executive coach two times per month. Additionally, supplemental activities and community events are scheduled throughout the year that are highly recommended but not required.

8. ARE THERE ANY EXCEPTIONS TO THE SURGE ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENT?

Fellows are required to attend all sessions and participate for the duration of the program. In the event that extenuating circumstances arise, exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis. Each cohort is intentionally curated, and it is important for all fellows to uphold a high standard of attendance and engagement to meet our design for a transformative learning environment and experience. Applicants for the fellowship should make sure they are available on the designated dates for the entire day.

9. IS THERE CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT WITH SURGE AFTER THE FELLOWSHIP?

Yes, it is important to us to continue to cultivate the relationships and professional development of Surge alumni. We have an active alumni community and a national alumni committee that partners with Surge staff to design and lead alumni programming.

10. DO I HAVE TO LIVE IN CHICAGO TO BE A FELLOW?

While we do not have a residency requirement, we are focused on Chicagoland, and the core of our fellowship curriculum is about education in Chicago. Additionally, it is critical that fellows are able to attend in-person session programming and build community in Chicago when applicable.

11. IS THE AGE RANGE A STRICT REQUIREMENT?

The age range is more of a guide to signify the life stage of Surge Fellows, and is not used as a hard cut-off for selection. We review each application on a case-by-case basis and look at each applicant holistically when making decisions regarding fit and readiness for the fellowship experience.

12. IS THE BACHELOR'S DEGREE A STRICT REQUIREMENT?

We review each application on a case-by-case basis and do give consideration to cases in which an individual's trajectory as an emerging leader has not been impacted by them not having a Bachelor's degree.

13. WILL THE 2025 SURGE FELLOWSHIP BE HELD VIRTUALLY OR IN-PERSON?

For the 2025 Surge Fellowship year, all sessions are planned to be in-person. COVID protocols will be in place to ensure the health and safety of all in our community- and will follow the wisdom, needs, and risk-tolerance of our community in doing so. Our priority is the physical and psychological well-being and safety of our people.