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Current, the region's preeminent water innovation hub, wins 2022 Chicago Innovation Award

Current is one of 21 recipients of the Chicago Innovation Award for its work to develop H2NOW Chicago, a platform supporting real-time water-quality monitoring for the Chicago River.

November 17, 2022 (CHICAGO) — Current, the region's preeminent water innovation hub, has been awarded the Chicago Innovation Award for its work on H2NOW Chicago, a real-time water-quality monitoring platform for the Chicago River. One of 21 winners, Current was honored with the Social Innovator Award.

Supported in part by significant funding from The Chicago Community Trust's Our Great Rivers program, H2NOW Chicago first launched to the public in 2021. It completed its second season in late 2022.

“Most people think that the Chicago River is either toxic or swimmable. The reality on most days is that it is neither, and most importantly, the water quality is always changing,” said Alaina Harkness, Current's Executive Director. “Current created H2NOW Chicago with our partners because we believe that public interest technology for water quality is essential as we work to improve the long-term health and productivity of our waterways.”

Leveraging leading-edge sensing and analytic technologies, H2NOW measures water-quality parameters and communicates them with the

public in real-time. Three probes with embedded sensors collect data about fecal coliform levels every fifteen minutes at three spots along the Chicago River: North Branch, South Branch and Main Stem. The goal of H2NOW is to grow public understanding about Chicago River water quality, providing a foundation for Chicago residents and visitors to be informed and engaged river users and stewards. The resource is available at H2NOWChicago.org.

In addition to The Chicago Community Trust, the more-than 20 partners on this project include the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Chicago, City of Chicago Department of Water Management, Proteus Instruments, IOSight, Shedd Aquarium, and members of the Current Research Consortium.

Current, a catalyst for better, cleaner water, is also leading the development of strategies to grow an inclusive Blue Economy in the region, guided by an advisory group of community and workforce development experts, water startups and public sector and industry leaders.

ABOUT CURRENT

Current is an independent nonprofit water innovation hub. Founded in Chicago in 2016, our mission is to grow an inclusive Blue Economy, accelerate innovation and solve pressing water challenges. We bring together corporations, advocates, researchers, and governments to develop water management policies and test new technologies – projects that would be too risky or even impossible without sustained collaboration. Current has helped attract more than \$20M in federal investments for water innovation to the region, launched the first real-time water quality monitoring tool for the Chicago River, and supported the commercialization of more than a dozen water startups.

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