



Grant Guidelines

Grant Program Goals

The Catalyst Fund provides one-time, non-renewable capacity building support for nonprofits seeking to make a positive impact on health or health care access for people with low-income and residents of Massachusetts who have been economically, socially, or racially marginalized. The grant program is supported by contributions from Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts employees and vendors.

Context

Nonprofit organizations that serve the health and health care needs of people with low-income and residents of Massachusetts who have been economically, socially, or racially marginalized, often operate with limited resources and capacity to entirely fulfill the needs of community members and staff. While implementing large-scale initiatives or trying to keep up with the demands of ongoing operations, organizations are often forced to be more reactive as opposed to proactive. As a result, launching new initiatives to strengthen their infrastructure, or taking time to plan for the future or ensure sustainability, can be a luxury. The Catalyst Fund is intended to help organizations pay for some of the activities that can move them forward, position them for future opportunities, and as its name implies, help spark innovation.

Key Program Elements and Eligibility Criteria

The Catalyst Fund provides one-year, non-renewable grant awards up to \$5,000 for capacity-building expenses to Massachusetts community-based organizations to address a health or health care component of their work. The Foundation will accept applications from community-based organizations, community health centers, and social service organizations, even from those for which health is not a core activity or emphasis; as long as a compelling connection to health or health care is demonstrated as a focus of the proposed work, applications will be accepted for review. Hospitals and hospital affiliated organizations are excluded from consideration for these grants.

In response to the growing needs associated with COVID-19, the Catalyst Fund is only accepting proposals from grassroots organizations responding to health-related community needs resulting from the pandemic. While we acknowledge that the need for food and hygiene items will persist, there are fewer community resources available to support pandemic-related operational changes. Therefore, the Catalyst Fund will no longer fund proposals seeking support primarily for food, personal protective equipment (PPE), and disposable items, and will support organizations through activities that move them forward, position them for the future, and as the name implies, help them to innovate to better realize their mission during this challenging time.

Grants are not intended to cover recurring general operating funds such as salaries of staff members, overhead costs or membership dues. The Catalyst Fund also does not support conference or gala sponsorships, nor capital campaigns.

Grants will only be made to Massachusetts-based organizations that serve the health or health care needs of people with low-income and residents who have been economically, socially, or racially marginalized. Grants will not be made to individuals, for-profit entities, hospitals, academic institutions, or religious institutions. Past support from the Foundation and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts is taken into consideration during grant review.

Application Procedures

Applications for a Catalyst Fund grant can be submitted at any time through the Foundation's [online grantmaking portal](#). Applications deemed complete by the 5th of each month (or the next business day if the 5th falls on a weekend) will be reviewed by a committee later that same month. Applications received after the 5th of the month will be reviewed the following month. Applicants will hear back within roughly one month from their submission date. Foundation staff may contact applicants for clarifying information following receipt of an application.

Organizations can only submit one application per month and an organization cannot receive more than one Catalyst Fund grant within a twelve-month period and a final grant report must be submitted before applying for new funding.

Application Questions

Applicants will be asked to answer a set of questions to complete the application process. There are additional questions depending on the nature of your application. Associated with each question is a character limit, which includes spaces.

1. Brief Summary of the Request. *(3,000 characters)*
2. Population of Focus. Describe the population of focus for your work including geographic and demographic characteristics as well as specific racial and ethnic groups.
3. Describe your organization's mission and core activities. *(1,000 characters)*
4. How will your project address a health or health care issue affecting your client population? If available, provide an estimate of the percentage or number of clients this project seeks to help. *(2,000 characters)*
5. Describe how the grant funds will be used. How will it enhance your organization's capacity to address an opportunity or problem you seek to address? *(2,000 characters)*
6. If the project budget is more than \$5,000, how do you plan to secure the balance? Have you identified other funders or already have funding commitments? *(1,000 characters)*
7. If your request is to hire a consultant: Please describe the expertise that the consultant will bring to enhance the capacity of your organization and share your plans for identifying and securing the appropriate consultant. *(1,000 characters)*
8. If your request is to purchase technology
 - a. How does this new technology enhance the capacity of your organization beyond daily functions? What does it enable you to do that you cannot do without it? *(1,000 characters)*
 - b. Is your organization able to support this expense through its existing organizational budget? *(1,000 characters)*

Applicants must upload one set of the following attachments:

1. **Project Budget:** A project budget itemizing how the funds will be spent if awarded. You may upload an existing budget or download a template provided by the Foundation in its portal.
2. **Organizational Budget:** A copy of the organization's current operating budget, showing year-to-date planned and actual income and expenses, along with a budget narrative
3. **Tax-Exempt Designation:** A current 501(c)(3) IRS tax status documentation letter. If you have a fiscal agent, please attach a copy of that organization's IRS ruling, as well as a brief letter stating their commitment to receive the funds as the fiscal agent.

Applicants will also have the option of uploading an attachment that provides information supplementing the required materials. However, it is encouraged that the most prevalent information relative to your application be included in the narrative.

Organizations that receive a Catalyst Fund grant will be required to submit a brief report describing the outcome or impact of the award at the end of the one-year grant period. The Foundation will issue a reminder with a report outline.

For more information, contact Sarah Merrefield, Senior Program Officer by email: sarah.merrefield@bcbsma.com