



Racial Justice in Health
Grant Guidelines
Frequently Asked Questions

How does the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBSMA) Foundation define an organization as people of color-led?

The BCBSMA Foundation defines people of color led organizations as organizations where:

1. 75 percent of the highest paid staff members identify as people of color from one or more of the following racial and ethnic backgrounds: African American/Black, Asian or Pacific Islander, Latino/a/e/x, Indigenous, and/or any other identities of color not listed; and
2. at least 51 percent of the board are people of color; and
3. Primarily serve people of color (75 percent of the population served)

What does highest paid staff member mean?

- Generally, the highest paid staff members are those who comprise the leadership team though we are flexible given that organizations of many different sizes and leadership structures may apply for this grant opportunity.

How does the BCBSMA Foundation define an organization as grassroots?

Grassroots organizations:

- Are run by the people directly concerned with and impacted by the issues they seek to address, and therefore, have a deep understanding of the needs and experiences of their constituents.
- Use community-based and resident-driven approaches in identifying and solving critical local or statewide issues.

What are the measures of success for this grant?

By the end of the two-year program, grant partners will demonstrate:

- A commitment to internal infrastructure enhancements with a focus on one or more of the following areas: governance, internal operations and management, sustainability and fundraising, communication and messaging, leadership development, data acquisition and analysis, and/or evaluation
- The capacity to effectively engage community members to identify health-related community challenges and influence positive change
- Active participation in a coalition or partnership to address the challenges identified by community members
- A commitment to launching or meaningfully participating in a policy advocacy initiative or community engagement effort focused on health and the health care experience for people of color in Massachusetts

Do we need to be a 501(c)(3) organization to apply? Can we apply using a fiscal sponsor?

- All grant applicants must be a registered 501(c)(3) organization or have a fiscal sponsor.

What will the primary criteria be for selecting applicant organization to move on to the RFP phase?

Letters of inquiry will be evaluated according to the applicant's ability to demonstrate:

- That the organization meets the BCBSMA Foundation's definition of a people of color-led organization
- The impact the funding and technical assistance will have on the organization
- The organization's experience in applying a racial justice lens to its work
- The organization's role and engagement in the community(ies) it serves
- A demonstrated interest in impacting a practice, policy, or structure in the health or health care delivery system, that if addressed, could make a positive impact on reducing or eliminating racial inequities in health for your community

Do you have a minimum size for eligible organizations, either in terms of budget, or staff size?

No, we do not have a minimum threshold for either budget size or staffing size. However, we will look at organization's stability and capacity for sustainability into the future. If your organization is invited to submit a full proposal, it will have to demonstrate that it is well positioned to take on the activities outlined for the project and can achieve the success indicators. In addition, the funds for this grant are intended to offset staff costs therefore, the organization must have paid staff.

Do you have a maximum size for eligible organizations, either in terms of budget, or staff size?

No, we do not have a maximum threshold for either budget size or staffing size, though we seek to fund grassroots organizations led by people of color, which may be eligibility factors that favor organizations smaller in scale.

We have a current BCBSMA Foundation grant, does that impact eligibility?

Current BCBSMA Foundation grant partners that meet program eligibility requirements are encouraged to apply.

Can we collaborate with another organization on our application? Or more specifically, can two or more organizations put in a joint proposal?

We will leave it to you to determine the best ways of achieving the goals for this program. Critical factors to keep in mind are that the grant applicant must be a people of color-led organization and it must be grassroots. In addition, the grant partners collectively will have to demonstrate that they can achieve the measures of success for this program. Beyond that, you have the ability to build a collaboration based on the needs and measures of success for this program.

Can we use the grant funding for existing work in this area?

Yes, if your organization is already working on health advocacy, this grant will be an opportunity to deepen your skills, knowledge and expertise in this area.

Can an organization that is volunteer driven (without paid staff) apply for this grant?

Organizations without paid staff are not eligible for the program.

Do organizations need to have health as a primary focus of their work?

Organizations that meet the program's eligibility requirements (people of color-led, grassroots) are not required to have health as core to their mission, though the work they wish to engage in for the grant program must have a health focus.

Do organizations need to have experience with advocacy or community engagement?

No, organizations do not need to have previous experience with advocacy or community engagement activities, however, selected organizations must show a demonstrated interest in building capacity to launch or meaningfully engage in a health or health care advocacy or community engagement activity as part of their participation in this program.

What does the \$50,000 grant funding support?

- At least 15% of the grant must support modest capacity building activities and/or other activities that will better position your organization to launch or meaningfully participate in a health advocacy campaign or community engagement activity. These activities are meant to be specifically tailored to your unique organizational needs and interests.

Remaining funds are intended to defray staff costs of participating in the program and/or to fund organizational capacity building to advance this work. ***What other support will be provided?***

- In addition to grant funding, the Foundation will provide up to ten technical assistance sessions per year which will include peer-to-peer learning for network building and knowledge sharing and topical sessions based on organizational needs and interests. Some of these sessions will be core and mandatory and some will be optional.
- The BCBSMA Foundation is committed to ensuring equal opportunity for funded organizations to share their leadership skills and expertise with each other and other key stakeholders

What are the phases of the program?

The grant program will advance in two, one-year phases:

- Phase One: Strengthening the Field – Technical Assistance. During this phase, grant partners will in a year-long learning cohort with topical sessions, shared experiences, and peer learning opportunities with a mix of in-person and virtual formats.
- Phase Two: Campaign Development, Community Engagement, and Building Grassroots Power for Policy Change. Interested grant partners, who have demonstrated a strong commitment to the program, can apply for a second year of grant funding to set an agenda, build power and engagement, and launch or meaningfully participate in a policy advocacy initiative or community engagement effort focused on health and the health care experience for people of color in Massachusetts.

Can organizations choose to stay in phase one after the first year of the grant program?

No, phase one offerings will conclude after the grant period ends.

What is the grant period for phase one?

January – December 2022.

Will there be more support for grant partners in phase two?

Yes, in Phase Two, grant partners will have access to customized coaching relevant to their specific agenda and additional resources will be available.

What is the application timeline?

- LOI Due: July 20, 2021, 12:00PM
- Notification of next steps: August 17, 2021
- Full proposals due: September 14, 2021, 12:00PM
- Decision: December 2021

Is there an opportunity for applicants to ask questions or seek technical support with submitting an application?

- Yes, BCBSMA Foundation staff are available to answer questions from applicants.
 - For proposal development questions, please contact Sarah Merrefield, Senior Program Officer; Sarah.Merrefield@bcbsma.com
 - For any questions or issues with the online grantmaking portal, please contact Evelyn Monteiro, Grants Management Administrator: evelyn.monteiro@bcbsma.com
- The BCBSMA Foundation will also share and update this Frequently Asked Questions document on its website.