



Racial Justice in Health

Grant Guidelines

Letter of Inquiry Requirements

Overview

The long-term goal of the Racial Justice in Health program is to support local and state efforts to advance policies and practices that promote racial justice and equity in health and health care delivery. This goal will be achieved by ensuring more people of color-led organizations are influencing and participating in the process to establish and change health and health care policies. The grant program will work with people of color-led organizations to strengthen the field by boosting community engagement, building grassroots power, and developing campaigns.

While Massachusetts is home to many strong health and health care advocacy organizations that focus on strengthening community-based policy activities, increasing community participation in public policy development, and promoting collaboration among statewide policy and advocacy, few are led by people of color and few are 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. These factors mean they are uniquely positioned to play a leadership role in positively impacting health and health care delivery in the Commonwealth. These grassroots organizations use community-based and resident-driven approaches in identifying and solving critical local or statewide issues. The Racial Justice in Health grant program will support people of color-led, grassroots organizations to strengthen their internal organizational capacity and increase their skills, knowledge of, and expertise in health and health care advocacy. The program aims to expand their leadership role in promoting policy solutions that result in better access to quality, affordable health care, and improvements to the health care experience in Massachusetts for communities of color.

The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation (BCBSMA Foundation), in partnership with the Rx Foundation, will select at least six grassroots, people of color-led organizations (defined below*) to receive up to \$50,000 each in grant support to defray the staff costs of participating in the program and/or to fund organizational transformation activity. Selected organizations will be asked to budget at least 15 percent of grant funds for modest capacity building activities and/or coaching activities that are specifically tailored to their unique organizational needs and interests. In addition to grant funding, the BCBSMA Foundation will provide technical assistance for people of color-led organizations interested in dismantling institutional and structural racism in health and health care delivery through community engagement, building grassroots power, developing campaigns and strategic partnerships, and policy advocacy.

The grant program will advance in two phases to ensure that selected organizations may play a strong leadership role in advancing policies and practices to promote racial justice and equity in health and health care delivery in Massachusetts.

Phase One: Strengthening the Field – Technical Assistance

Grant partners will participate in a year-long learning cohort with topical sessions, shared experiences, and peer learning opportunities with a mix of in-person and virtual formats. Grant partners will be invited to include representatives of their leadership team to participate in the sessions.

Grant Partner Commitment

Grant partners will be asked to participate in up to ten sessions per year including 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.

Cohort-Based Technical Assistance

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. Once organizations are selected for funding they will be surveyed on topics of interest and areas of expertise, with an invitation to share their knowledge and experience as part of the reciprocal peer learning design. Topics could include specific organizational areas of expertise, unique organizational strengths, or skills specific to health, organizing, community engagement, or advocacy.

Session examples:

- Organizational infrastructure (to be offered as optional, depending on organizational needs and interests):
 - Governance, internal operations, and management
 - Sustainability and fundraising
 - Communication and messaging
 - Leadership development
 - Data acquisition and analysis
 - Evaluation
- Advancing health and health care policy advocacy (core to participating in the cohort):
 - Health policy 101
 - Policy advocacy 101
 - Community organizing 101
 - Racial inequities in health
 - Health advocacy leadership development
 - Relationship and network development
 - Coalition building/participation
 - Other topics requested by the cohort

The BCBSMA Foundation will engage outside technical assistance providers for specific topical sessions. The BCBSMA Foundation will also call upon its [Strengthening the Voice for Access](#) grant partners to provide relevant expertise. The advocacy organizations supported by the Strengthening the Voice for Access grant program each bring a depth of experience in

community-based policy activities, increasing citizen participation in public policy development, and promoting collaboration among statewide policy and advocacy organizations.

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. The second year of funding will be used 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. Phase two funding will be at least \$50,000 per grant with the possibility of larger grant awards.

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

- A commitment to internal infrastructure transformation through 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, 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

Eligibility

- Organizations must be grassroots, people of color-led nonprofits serving people of color in Massachusetts (defined below*)
- Organizations seeking to make a positive impact on health or health care for people with low-income and residents of Massachusetts who have been economically, socially, ethnically, or racially marginalized
- Organizations interested in developing their organizational capacity for health and health advocacy, strengthening the field by boosting community engagement, developing campaigns, building grassroots power, and influencing policy changes that lead to better health
- Organizations with an interest in developing their capacity to address issues at an institutional and/or systematic level as it pertains to their health and health care advocacy goals
- Organizations are not required to be wholly dedicated to health and health care, though it is expected that funded work will focus on health

The BCBSMA Foundation will not consider requests to support the following

- Direct medical or clinical care
- Types of Organizations

- For-profit organizations
- Religious organizations
- Hospitals
- Coalitions without nonprofit status or fiscal sponsorship
- Individuals

Application Steps and Timeline

- Q&A Webinar: June 28, 2021, 10:00AM
- 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

Letter of Inquiry (LOI) Requirements

Below are the narrative questions required for the LOI for the Racial Justice in Health grant program. The LOI is due via the BCBSMA Foundation's online grantmaking portal by Tuesday, July 20, 2021 at 12:00 PM.

We strongly encourage applicants to develop the LOI in a Word document first to ensure the appropriate number of characters before transferring your final submission to the online portal. Each question has a maximum character count limit, which includes spaces.

1. Organizational information (2,500 characters):

- How would you describe your role in the community?
- Describe your organizational experience applying a racial justice lens to your work.
- If selected, what impact do you envision the Racial Justice in Health funding and technical assistance will have on your organization?

2. Racial Justice in Health (2,500 characters):

- Please share an example of 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(ies) that fits within one of the Foundation's focus areas: behavioral health, access to coverage and care, and structural racism and racial inequities in health.

Applicants will be asked to share whether organizational leadership and board include people of color.

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

- 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.
- The organization meets the BCBSMA Foundation's definition of a grassroots, people of color-led organization.

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

- 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
- At least 51 percent of the board are people of color; and
- Primarily serve people of color (75 percent of the population served)

Questions

Applicants are welcome to contact BCBSMA Foundation staff with any questions as they develop their proposals. For proposal development questions, please contact Sarah Merrefield, Senior Program Officer; Sarah.Merrefield@bcbsma.com

For technical and logistical questions related to accessing the online grantmaking portal, please contact Evelyn Monteiro, Grants Management Administrator; Evelyn.Monteiro@bcbsma.com

The BCBSMA Foundation will also share and update a Frequently Asked Questions document on its website.