



## Frequently Asked Questions – Advancing Community-Driven Mental Health

### Updates and Clarifications

September 6, 2022

#### Are agencies that focus on specific populations, such as individuals experiencing homelessness, eligible for this grant program?

- Yes, organizations that focus on specific populations such as individuals experiencing homelessness are eligible to apply. This program will focus on individuals who are economically, racially, culturally, or socially marginalized.
- For people who are homeless or unstably housed, it is important that applicant organizations can clearly articulate the reoccurring and consistent nature of their engagement with those individuals in order to implement the PM+ intervention effectively.

#### Would this intervention be effective for people with developmental disabilities?

- The efficacy of the PM+ intervention has not been studied with people with developmental disabilities, so this grant program is not recommended for this population of individuals.

#### Would this intervention be effective for those dealing with domestic violence and abuse?

- This program does not have a specific domestic violence focus and is **not recommended for individuals experiencing imminent protection risks**. In the case of imminent protection risks, including life threatening domestic violence and abuse, psychological first aid and a specialized referral to a domestic violence agency to establish safety and stability is prioritized. If an individual is safe and has established stability with enough support, the individual could benefit from Problem Management Plus. In the case of long-standing chronic abuse, which has been deemed to not be high-risk and an individual is connected to supports to address the abuse, Problem Management Plus may be considered with conversations with their support team and advice of a licensed clinician. Each organization will

determine and develop their own eligibility criteria with consideration to the populations already served.

### **Does this grant program address substance use?**

- Problem Management Plus does not address substance use disorders directly **and is not recommended for use with individuals who are severely impaired due to substance use disorders**. Depending on where the individual is in their recovery process and supports already established, Problem Management Plus could be beneficial. All applicant organizations will need to develop referral protocols (including identifying a referral agency) for substance use issues identified during the program and will need to determine eligibility criteria for those in recovery.

### **Which types of staff members should participate in the grant program? Is this training appropriate for interns, volunteers, or those paid by stipends?**

- Staff members participating in the program may include case workers, community health workers, recovery coaches, certified peer specialists and people working in other non-clinical direct service roles.
- The staff training is not appropriate for interns, volunteers, or those paid by stipend.
- It is recommended that the staff members chosen to participate in the Advancing Community-Driven Mental Health grant program meet the following criteria:
  - have a keen interest in supporting individuals on a deeper level than they are able to in their present position,
  - are interested in developing their knowledge, skills and abilities to provide additional supports to the organization's population of focus, and
  - are excited about the prospect of this new program.
- This training is not appropriate for stipend individuals. Stipend staff member have a different relationship with the organization than a staff member, so this program will not be appropriate for a stipend individual.
- This training is not appropriate for interns. The purpose of this training and the Advancing Community-Based Mental Health program is to build the capacity in the organization to support community members accessing your services. By the nature of their role, interns come and go in an organization and so training them does not build the organization's capacity over the long term.
- While the issues are a little different, volunteers also have a different relationship with the organization than a staff member, so this program will also not be appropriate for a volunteer.

**What training will the clinical supervisors receive in order to appropriately supervise PM+ staff members?**

- . Given their knowledge, training and expertise, the clinical supervisor training will be a truncated version of the training that will be delivered to participating staff members. We anticipate that the supervisor training time will be eight to ten hours.

**What are some of the activities that will be included in the evaluation of the grant program?**

The following activities will be a part of the evaluation of the Advancing Community-Driven Mental Health grant program:

- An initial assessment of the funded organization to assess the organization’s capacities and the areas where they will need additional support in adopting PM+, focusing on data collection and evaluation capacities.
- The completion of a quarterly reporting template to report on the progress, successes, challenges, and technical assistance needs.
- Qualitative interviews conducted by the evaluation partner with funded organizations.

**What do we need to consider as we think about referral to next level care?**

- It is important that the applicant organization has a concrete understanding of existing community resources to address mental health, domestic violence, substance use, housing, and other social determinants of health and have a plan to deepen relationships.



**Frequently Asked Questions – Advancing Community Driven Mental Health  
Updated July 20, 2022**

**What geographical area are you focused on for this program?**

- The BCBSMA Foundation funds programs across Massachusetts. This program will look at applicants from across the Commonwealth.

**Do we need to have the Memo of Understanding before we submit the Letter of Inquiry?**

- No, you do not need to have a Memo of Understanding (MOU) before you submit the Letter of Inquiry. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be required between partners (such as a licensed clinical social worker, or an organization providing clinician social work support) during the Request for Proposal (RFP) phase. The MOU

should include activities that each partner will be responsible for and should outline agreements on how the partners will work together.

**How many organizations will be funded under this program?**

- Five organizations will be funded under this program. The maximum grant amount is \$100,000 for the planning year and up to \$150,000 for the subsequent two years of the program.

**What is your thinking about sustainability following the 3-year term of the grant? Do you anticipate providing ongoing funding, or assistance finding additional funding?**

- We do not anticipate funding beyond the three years. Our goal is to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program so that public and private payers will consider covering it and providing sustainable funding in the future.

**What is the clinical effectiveness of this model?**

Emerging global evidence demonstrates the efficacy of Problem Management Plus in reducing psychological distress when delivered to individuals or groups.<sup>1</sup> The model can be replicated across context and has also been adapted in global settings, such as at Partners In Health [across sites](#) in Rwanda, Peru, [Mexico](#), and Malawi), and domestically in the US.

**What are the legal ramifications for implementing Problem Management Plus for the host organization?**

- The skills covered in Problem Management Plus (breathing exercises, getting active, strengthening one's network of social support) can be taught by lay persons. Problem Management Plus does not involve clinical diagnosis and is not therapy. Rather it is a series of skill-based sessions facilitated by a trained staff member. Similar to other peer-facilitated interventions, it is important for each organization to clearly define the employee's role and which activities are appropriate and which are not. Additionally, it is important to appropriately market the program to the community to ensure there is a clear understanding of what the program is and is not. If you have concerns about licensure, liability, or other legal issues, we encourage you to consult your own legal advisors.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2583388>

## **Eligibility Requirements:**

### **What types of organizations are not eligible for this grant program?**

The BCBSMA Foundation will not consider requests to support the following:

- For-profit organizations
  - Faith-based organizations
  - Coalitions without nonprofit status or fiscal sponsorship
  - Individuals
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- In addition, for this specific grant program, hospitals, community health centers and community behavioral health centers are not eligible as we are trying to expand access to mental health services beyond traditional clinical settings.

### **Are clinical behavioral health organizations such as Federally Qualified Health Centers and Community Health Centers eligible to apply?**

- No, clinical behavioral health organizations such as Federally Qualified Health Centers and Community Health Centers are not eligible to apply. The goal of this grant program is to expand access to mental health services beyond traditional behavioral health clinical settings.

### **Are faith-based organizations eligible to apply for the grant?**

- Faith-based organizations are not eligible to apply. However, if a faith-based organization is affiliated with a community-based organization, the community-based organization is eligible to apply.

### **Are agencies that focus on specific populations such as individuals experiencing homelessness eligible?**

- Yes, organizations that focus on specific populations such as individuals experiencing homelessness are eligible to apply. This program will focus on individuals that are economically, racially, culturally, or socially marginalized.

### **Can non-clinical multi-service organizations apply?**

- Yes, multiservice non-clinical organizations can apply.

### **Is a non-profit social services organization that provides both clinical and non-clinical programs eligible as long as Problem Management Plus would not be implemented in the clinical programs?**

- Yes, non-profit social services organizations that provides both clinical and non-clinical programs are eligible to apply, however, the focus of the Problem Management Plus implementation must be on the non-clinical programs. In addition, priority will be given to organizations that have a small or no behavioral health

capacity in their organization. Given the nuances of various organizational structure related to this question, we encourage applicants to reach out to Jacquie Anderson at the Foundation [Jacquie.anderson@bcbsma.com](mailto:Jacquie.anderson@bcbsma.com) to discuss your particular circumstances.

### **Can organizations apply as a group?**

- No organizations cannot apply as a group. This program is intended to develop the capacity of one organization to implement Problem Management Plus.

### **What does the staff training look like?**

- Participating staff members (2-3) will receive training based on the Problem Management Plus curriculum, adapted for the Massachusetts environment as well as the experience and knowledge of the applicant organization. Each staff member participates in approximately 40 hours of in-person and virtual training sessions and 15 hours of practicum or supervised practice to develop the skills necessary to implement Problem Management Plus.
- The training will include a mix of written materials, virtual/in-person training and presentations, recorded sessions for self-paced learnings, interactive activities, and pre-and post-tests for participants.
- The training will take place in the second half of the planning year (Year 1) and will take place over a period of time to allow for the organization to fully integrate the learning in the implementation years of the program.

### **Training Topics include:**

- Depression, Anxiety, Stress
- Helping and listening skills
- Managing difficult problems
- Confidentiality
- Cultural and gender differences
- Other essential skills

All grant funded partner organization will participate in the training at the same time.

### **Does this program allow for train the trainer model?**

- We are exploring this possibility of providing a train the trainer model in the second or third year of the program.

### **Is this training appropriate for interns or volunteers?**

- No, this training is not appropriate for interns. The purpose of this training and the Advancing Community-Based Mental Health program is to build the capacity in the

organization to support community members accessing your services. By the nature of their role, interns come and go in an organization and so training them does not build the organization's capacity over the long term.

- While the issues are a little different, volunteers also have a different relationship with the organization than a staff member, so this program will also not be appropriate for a volunteer.

#### **What staff members do you anticipate participating in the program?**

- Staff members participating in the program may include case workers, community health workers, recovery coaches, certified peer specialized and people working in other non-clinical service roles.

#### **Would this model be effective for those dealing with domestic violence and abuse?**

- This program does not have a specific domestic violence focus and is not recommended for individuals experiencing imminent protection risks. In the case of imminent protection risks, including life threatening domestic violence and abuse, psychological first aid and a specialized referral to a domestic violence agency to establish safety and stability is prioritized. If an individual is safe and has established stability with enough support, the individual could benefit from Problem Management Plus. In the case of long-standing chronic abuse, which has been deemed to not be high-risk and an individual is connected to supports to address the abuse, Problem Management Plus may be considered with conversations with their support team and advice of a licensed clinician. Each organization will determine and develop their own eligibility criteria with consideration to the populations already served.

#### **Does this grant program address substance use?**

- Problem Management Plus does not address substance use disorders directly and is not recommended to use with individuals who are severely impaired due to substance use disorders. Depending on where the individual is at in their recovery process and supports already established, Problem Management Plus could be beneficial as an adjust support. Applicants will need to identify a referral organization for individuals dealing with issues of substance use and will further determine eligibility criteria for those in recovery.

#### **Most clients have some degree of trauma – is that addressed in this model?**

- Trauma is not specifically addressed in this model, yet this model was developed for those experiencing acute and chronic adversity often with a history of trauma. Given the high prevalence of trauma, each organization may adapt the curriculum to

include an additional psycho-educational session to increase knowledge, awareness and resources with support from the technical assistance team and licensed clinician. Additionally, the Problem Management Plus training will cover the basics of trauma-informed care and how to practice it within the Problem Management Plus model.

**Can the licensed clinician time be included in budget?**

- Yes, the licensed clinician’s time, who will provide supervision to the other staff members, can be included in the budget.

**Will this program support mental health advocacy?**

This program does not explicitly support mental health advocacy. However, we seek to share lessons learned from this work which could inform, policies, potentially implementing the model across other organizations domestically, or other future efforts.

**Is the Problem Management Plus model in this case 1:1 or a group program?**

- Advancing Community-Driven Mental Health will support the 1:1 Problem Management Plus program.

**Is Problem Management Plus adaptable to different literacy levels and cognitive abilities?**

- The Problem Management Plus curriculum is very adaptable and can be adapted to various literacy levels. Problem Management Plus has not been adapted to deliver the intervention to people with cognitive disabilities.

**Is it expected that Problem Management Plus will be fully integrated into one's behavioral health program?**

- This grant program is geared toward community-based organizations outside of traditional clinical settings. If the organization offers other behavioral health supports and services, it would seem logical that the Problem Management Plus program be integrated with those services. If there are specific questions about this, please contact Jacquie Anderson at [Jacquie.anderson@bcbsma.com](mailto:Jacquie.anderson@bcbsma.com)

**How do you define a licensed clinician?**



- Licensed clinicians are licensed by the state to support people experiencing mental health distress. This category could include a licensed mental health counsellor, clinical social worker etc.
- As a reminder for this program, the clinician is **NOT** providing clinical services to clients, but is supporting and supervising staff members participating in this grant program.

**What are the evaluation or assessment components of the Advancing Community-Based Mental Health program? How may it impact clients?**

- There are two evaluation or assessment components as part of this grant program. First, the Foundation has partnered with the Institute for Community Health (ICH) to serve as the overall program evaluator. Working with the Foundation and the Technical Assistance Providers (The Family Van and Partners In Health), this evaluation will focus on the impact of the program over the three years.
- For the assessment as it relates to clients and using Problem Management Plus there are several assessments used over the course of the model to determine progress.
  - A Pre-PM+ Assessment – the client fills out an assessment before engaging in the PM + with the staff member.
  - A “during” PM + assessment – at the beginning of each session with the staff member, the client will fill out a brief form to help monitor progress.
  - A post – PM + assessment – within a few weeks of the client completing PM + clients will be asked to fill out a brief assessment.

**How many individuals should grant partners aim to serve via Problem Management Plus programming each year?**

It is difficult at this stage of the process to establish absolute numbers prior to knowing the capacity of each funded organization. Each funded organization will work with the evaluators and Technical Assistance providers during the grant period to further refine outputs and outcomes based on their reach and structure of services.

**What geography are you focused on for this program?**

- The BCBCMA Foundation funds programs across Massachusetts

**How many organizations will be funded under this program?**

- We will be funding five organizations under this program

**What is your thinking about sustainability following the 3-year term of the grant? Do you anticipate providing ongoing funding, or assistance finding sustaining funding?**

- We do not anticipate ongoing funding. Our goal is to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program and then advocate for ongoing funding through the health insurance system such as MassHealth.

**Pre-Webinar**

**What is the goal of the program?**

The Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation (BCBSMA Foundation) will fund a new project to provide community members with low-intensity mental health intervention and support through community-based organizations.

**Advancing Community-Driven Mental Health**, the Foundation's new grantmaking program in behavioral health will utilize a community-based low-intensity psychological intervention known as Problem Management Plus (PM+)<sup>2</sup>, to support community members exposed to adversity in their day to day lives learn tools and skills to manage mental health stressors and provide community based referrals for community members who are at risk of developing or are currently experiencing a severe mental health challenges. The 2021 Health of America Report from the Blue Cross Blue Shield reported that 35% of Black respondents and 33% of Hispanic respondents are more likely to seek information on mental health outside of the health care system and to prefer providers with similar life experiences, as opposed to 25% of White respondents.<sup>3</sup> In alignment with those findings, this program aims to overcome traditional barriers of access to mental health services, especially for economically, racially, culturally, or socially marginalized individuals. It allows staff members of a community-based organization to deliver mental health support in the community, focusing on teaching basic concepts and skills that enable individuals to address and deal with issues of immediate concern to them.

The goal of this program is two-fold:

1. Improve access to community-based mental health services for individuals experiencing mild to moderate mental health distress and practical problems of daily living.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-MSD-MER-16.2>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.bcbs.com/the-health-of-america/reports/racial-disparities-diagnosis-and-treatment-of-major-depression?utm\\_source=pr&utm\\_medium=article&utm\\_ID=&utm\\_term=&utm\\_content=national&utm\\_campaign=mental\\_health\\_month](https://www.bcbs.com/the-health-of-america/reports/racial-disparities-diagnosis-and-treatment-of-major-depression?utm_source=pr&utm_medium=article&utm_ID=&utm_term=&utm_content=national&utm_campaign=mental_health_month)

2. Develop the skills of a non-clinical workforce to support community members in addressing mild to moderate mental health distress and practical problems of daily living.

Under this grant program, the Foundation and its collaborators (Partners in Health, The Family Van, and the Institute for Community Health) will provide training, technical assistance, coaching, and implementation support to organizations that are interested in developing and implementing Problem Management Plus (PM+) services within their organizations.

### **Does this program deal with the full spectrum of behavioral health or just mental health?**

We recognize that co-occurring disorder of mental health and substance use are prevalent in our communities, and we believe in a holistic umbrella of behavioral health, however the PM+ intervention has been developed to address low-intensity mental health issues based on common mental health conditions (stress, fear, anxiety, depression, feelings of helplessness) for clients in their communities. For more acute mental health issues or co-occurring disorders grant partners will need to identify and refer potential clients to a higher level of service.

### **What type of training will be part of the grant program?**

Organizations will be provided training by Partners in Health and the Family Van.

The training will be based on the PM+ curriculum and adapted for the Massachusetts environment and the knowledge and experience of grant partner organizations. To develop the skills necessary to implement PM+, each staff member participates in approximately 40 in-person and virtual training sessions and 15 hours of practicum or supervised practice.

Training Topics include

- Depression, Anxiety, Stress
- Helping and listening skills
- Managing difficult problems
- Confidentiality
- Cultural and gender differences
- Other essential skills

### **Technical Assistance, and Coaching**

Organizations will be provided training, technical assistance, mentorship, and coaching during the program planning and implementation phases. This will include supporting the organization to adapt some of the elements of the PM+ to be culturally and site-specific to support grant partners to implement PM + successfully.

## **Learning Community**

To support funded organizations in their activities, the Foundation will convene organizations a few times a year in a learning community to foster shared learning around implementing PM+ in their organization and community. Grant partners will be expected to share experiences in carrying out grant activities with their peers and bring their expertise to share with others.

## **Evaluation**

To determine the efficacy of this new grant program the BCBSMA Foundation will be evaluating its planning and implementation. The purpose of the evaluation in the planning year is to provide feedback and actionable information throughout the year to facilitate real-time learning and identify opportunities for TA and supports that will shape the program for effective implementation and develop systems for a robust process and outcomes evaluation during the program implementation years

## **How much funding will each funded organization receive??**

The maximum grant amount is \$100,000 for the planning year and up to \$150,000 for the subsequent two years of the program.

## **How long is this grant program?**

This is a three-year grant program, renewable each year. Each organization will need to satisfy the requirements of the preceding year to be approved for funding in the subsequent year.

## **How long is the grant period?**

The grant period is three years January 2023 – December 2026, however each organization will need to satisfy the requirements of the preceding year to be approved for funding in the subsequent year.

How many organization will be funded?

**This program will fund 5 organizations.**

## **How does the planning year differ from the implementation years?**

During the planning year funded organizations will build the infrastructure and capacity to implement the PM+ intervention over the next two years. Year two and three of the program are focused on program implementation. During the program implementation phases funded organizations will be provided technical assistance, mentorship, and coaching to enable them to implement PM + successfully.

## **What can the dollars be used for?**

Grant dollars can be used for programmatic expenses – including staff, community outreach, clinician consultants and other program related requests, like materials or translation services.

Dollars can also be used to subcontract with another organization for clinical services that your organization may not have internally.

### **Partner Individual/Organization**

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be required between partners (such as a licensed clinical social worker, or an organization providing clinician social work support) during the Request for Proposal (RFP) phase. The MOU should include activities that each partner will be responsible for and should outline agreements on how the partners will work together.

### **What is the definition of a non-clinical organization?**

This grant program is focused on community-based organizations that do not have a main identity as a provider-based organization, such as community health center, hospitals, mental health clinics.

### **My organization provides some behavioral health services, are we eligible to apply?**

Community-based organization that provide some behavioral health services are eligible to apply.

### **Applicant/Selection Criteria**

The Foundation will only consider

- Nonprofit organizations that primarily serve people who have been socially, economically, culturally, or racially marginalized.
- Community-based non-clinical organizations that provide direct social or community services to individuals and families, focusing on those who are economically, racially, culturally, or socially marginalized.
- Community-based organizations with strong, trusting relationships with community members and cultural and linguistic ability to connect with constituency populations.
- Community-based organizations whose staff are reflective of their service population.

In addition, applicants must

- Have a licensed clinician on staff or have identified a partner organization with a licensed clinician that can serve as the clinical supervisor for staff participating in this program.
- Be willing to participate in the PM+ training both virtually and in-person.

- Be willing to participate in virtual and in-person convenings facilitated by the Foundation.
- Be able and interested in partnering with the Foundation to evaluate the initiative, including data collection.

**My organization currently receives funding under another Foundation program area (Catalyst Fund, Connecting Consumers with Care Racial Justice in Health, Special Initiatives) – are we eligible to apply?**

Yes, a current grant partner can apply for new funding in a different grant program area.

**What are the reporting requirements if we receive the grant award?**

Grant partners will be required to regularly report on their grant activities. The Foundation will provide individualized guidance and technical assistance to grant partners on data collection and reporting, as needed. The data generated from reports is designed to support grant partners in reporting on their progress, successes, challenges, and TA needs.

**What documents do we need to submit with the LOI?**

- Please submit an organization budget and tax-exempt letter. Project budgets will only be required for those asked to submit a full request for proposal.

**When is the Letter of Inquiry (LOI) due?**

Letters of Inquiry are August 9, 2022 at 12 Noon EST. *All proposals are due by 12:00 p.m. on date of the deadline. Please note there will be no technical support available for the [online portal](#) after the noon deadline.*

*We encourage all applicants to register and become familiar with the online portal prior to the deadline.*

**What amount of indirect is allowed in the budget?**

It is the Foundation's policy to pay no more than 15% of an overall budget for indirect costs.

**What if I have additional questions?**

Please register here [for](#) our webinar on May 16, 2022, at 12 Noon EST.

For programmatic questions, contact Jacquie Anderson, Senior Director of Grantmaking at [jacquie.anderson@bcbsma.com](mailto:jacquie.anderson@bcbsma.com).

For questions about the online portal, contact Evelyn Monteiro, Grants Management Administrator at [evelyn.monteiro@bcbsma.com](mailto:evelyn.monteiro@bcbsma.com).