

Special Initiatives Grant Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Updated May 2024

What is the goal of the program?

- The goal of the Foundation’s Special Initiative grant program is to make funding available to Massachusetts organizations to pilot or launch a new project that is aligned with the mission of the Foundation **but doesn’t necessarily fit within the already-existing Foundation grant programs.**
- The Special Initiatives grant program provides organizations with a one-time grant of up to \$50,000 grant to pilot or launch a new project to empower communities to lead healthy equity advancement at the community level. Projects should positively impact the health or health care related needs of those Massachusetts residents who have been economically, socially, culturally, or racially marginalized.
- These projects need to respond to identified health and health-related needs of the community served by the organization and align with one or more of the Foundation’s three focus areas – access to health coverage and care, access to behavioral health services, and elimination of structural racism and racial inequities in health. If successful, it is hoped that these projects can be sustained, scaled, and potentially, replicated.

What is your definition of health equity?

BCBSMA Foundation Health Equity Definition

- Everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their ideal health, according to their needs. Advancing health equity is a process of addressing limited access to economic resources, education, housing, etc. When focusing specifically on racial equity in health, advancing health equity means dismantling the systemic racism that underlies differences in the opportunity to be healthy.¹

How important is it to have **SMART Goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, and Realistic with a clear Timeframe)**?

- It is important that the Foundation understand what you hope to achieve within the 12-month grant period, by articulating your goals in a way that is specific and identifies how you will know if you are moving towards success.

¹ Adapted from Princeton University, “State Health and Value Strategies Internal Health Equity Language Guide.”

We like one of the current BCBSMA Foundation grant initiatives, can we apply for a Special Initiative Grant to replicate the same program?

- No, Special Initiative grant proposals cannot replicate a current Foundation grant program.
- We do seek Special Initiative grant proposals that align with one or more of the Foundation's three focus areas: access to health coverage and care, access to behavioral health services, and elimination of structural racism and racial inequities in health.

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

The BCBSMA Foundation does not accept proposals from:

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

Can we apply for another Special Initiative Grant before we finish our current one?

- Current Special Initiatives grant recipients are only eligible to apply for another Special Initiatives grant one year after their grant period and the submission of a final report. (i.e., If you received a Special Initiative grant for January 2023–January 2024 you are not eligible to apply until again until January 2025 and a final report has been submitted).

What geography are you focused on for this program?

- The BCBSMA Foundation funds organizations across Massachusetts.

What does it mean that the Foundation “will support at least 1/3 of the total project budget?”

- The Project Budget Worksheet provides the opportunity to identify the entire project budget alongside specifically what the BCBSMA Foundation dollars will support.
- The Foundation understands the total project budget may be more than the \$50,000 available through the Special Initiatives Program. However, please note the Foundation will prioritize proposals for projects where BCBSMA Foundation is funding at least 1/3 of the project budget. The Foundation supports collaborative grantmaking and we also believe that it is important to track the specific impact of

the Special Initiative grant dollars. Applicants with questions about whether their proposal meets this threshold are encouraged to contact the Foundation.

- Please Note: It is important that you have the additional funding in hand when applying to this program or have written indication from the other funding sources that your organization will receive those funds.

Do I have to identify the other funding sources if the project budget is larger than the \$50,000 Special Initiatives grant?

- Yes, if additional funding is required to complete your project, you will need to identify in the budget narrative and proposal where that additional funding is coming from, whether it has been secured, and what proportion of the overall project budget would be supported by the grant from BCBSMA Foundation.

What type of Organizational Budget do you require?

- We require your organization's board or department-approved budget for the most recent full year.

Do we have to apply for the full grant of amount of \$50,000?

- No. The Special Initiatives grant program provides one year of funding for **up to** \$50,000. Applications for less than \$50,000 are welcome.

We have a volunteer run organization, are we eligible to apply?

- To apply for this grant program, an organization must have a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit designation from the IRS or operate under the fiscal sponsorship of a tax-exempt nonprofit.
- The Special Initiatives program will not fund organizations that are only volunteer run.

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 (administrative overhead).

What can the dollars be used for?

- Grant dollars can be used for programmatic expenses – including staff. Dollars can also be used to subcontract with another organization for services that your organization may not have internally.
- Grant dollars *cannot* be used for stand-alone staff training that is not an integral part of the proposed program, marketing and outreach supplies (such as shirts, water bottles) and basic needs items (food, hygiene items, rental assistance) and salaries for new positions with no evidence of sustainability beyond the grant period.

My organization currently receives funding under another Foundation program area (Catalyst Fund, Supporting Health Coverage Enrollment Efforts, Racial Justice in Health, Advancing Community Driven Mental Health, existing Special Initiatives) – are we eligible to apply?

- Yes, a current grant partner can apply for new funding in a different grant program area.
- While organizations may have more than one active grant at any given time, the Foundation may give preference to organizations that have not received a grant award recently. If the Foundation declines a funding request, your organization may reapply as soon as the following cycle.

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

- Grant partners will be required to submit an end of year report on their grant activities. Final reports will ask grant partners to report progress on their project plan, goals and measures of success.

What documents do we need to submit with the RFP?

- Please submit an organization budget, tax-exempt letter, project budget and project budget narrative.

How to Contact Us

- If you have any questions that aren't covered in these guidelines, you'd like to discuss a special circumstance, or you want to see whether an idea may be a good fit for this initiative, please email Jacquie Anderson jacquie.anderson@bcbsma.com or schedule a time to meet using the following [link](#).

What if I have additional questions?

- For programmatic questions, contact Jacquie Anderson, Senior Director of Grantmaking at jacquie.anderson@bcbsma.com
- For questions about the online portal, contact Evelyn Monteiro, Grants Management Administrator at evelyn.monteiro@bcbsma.com

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 applicants to set up their accounts in the portal several days prior to the deadline.