Healthy Communities Foundation

2024 GRANT GUIDELINES

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ABOUT THE 2024 GRANT CYCLE

The annual grant cycle helps us stay connected to community, identify new grantee partners, and strengthen existing relationships with organizations whose programs and services align with our grantmaking priorities and strategic plan. These partnerships also enable us to respond quickly to emerging needs, strategies, and crises due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic and other challenges faced by community members in our service region.

As more organizations in our region learn about the Healthy Communities Foundation, our grant cycles have become increasingly competitive. As a smaller foundation with limited assets, we steward resources towards cultivating and deepening partnerships that advance systemic solutions for our communities' health and well-being. Our learning and evaluation framework guides alignment with our strategic plan and determines who we partner with and how.

APPLICATION PROCESS

This year's grant cycle is open to new and returning applicants seeking a one-year grant.

As the first step, all applicants must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI). The LOI focuses on an organization's approach to advancing health equity and health justice, their plan to utilize grant funds, and the demographics of their leadership and communities served.

Our staff will review all LOIs upon receipt, and we will notify all organizations whether they advance to the second step of submitting a full grant application.

IMPORTANT DATES

The LOI portal will open on January 2, 2024, and LOIs are due on February 15, 2024, 11:59 pm.

Organizations moving forward will be notified by March 15, 2024 to submit a full application.

WHAT WE LOOK FOR IN GRANTEE PARTNERS

We value transparency and recognize the time and resources it takes to apply for a grant. Therefore, it is important for us to be clear about what alignment to our grantmaking framework means to us.

OUR GRANTMAKING PRIORITIES AND WHAT ALIGNED WORK LOOKS LIKE

All partner organizations must demonstrate that their proposed work aligns with one or more of the categories below.

ACCESS to quality health services

High-quality, comprehensive healthcare services are often out of reach for community members in our region due to systemic racism, high medical costs, and/or lack of culturally affirming care.

Highly aligned partners can articulate how their efforts to improve healthcare access contribute to reducing racial and ethnic health inequities in our service region, especially within our Legacy and Equity zip codes.

ADDRESS social determinants of health

The unfair and avoidable difference in health status means that where people are born, work, live, and age are stronger drivers of health outcomes than individual lifestyle choices and clinical care.

Highly aligned partners can demonstrate how their work improves community health by addressing structural and social determinants of health in racially equitable ways.

ADVOCATE for health policies & systems change

Policy change can address the root causes of health inequities and impact existing structures that perpetuate racism.

Highly aligned partners can bridge their advocacy efforts with individuals, communities, and organizations in our service region to increase civic engagement and build community power toward health equity.

AUGMENT local health knowledge

Facilitating access to relevant and usable local community health data can enhance the capacity of community members to make well-informed decisions regarding their health and advocate for improved policies.

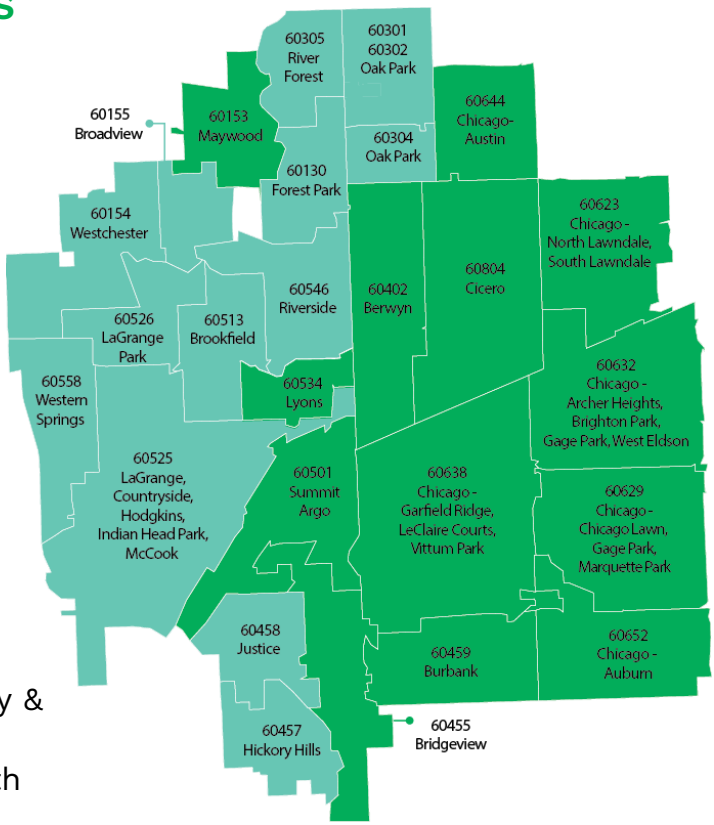
Highly aligned partners can demonstrate how they disseminate health knowledge and data in ways that local organizations and community members can easily understand and apply to everyday life. This may include facilitation and direct support of community-led inquiry, data collection, and outcomes reporting.

WHAT WE LOOK FOR IN GRANTEE PARTNERS

WHERE ALIGNED WORK HAPPENS

As a health conversion foundation, we fund a geographic region defined by the original service area of MacNeal Hospital, whose sale in 1999 established our endowment.

Our funding region covers a five-mile radius around the hospital, comprising 27 zip codes where more than 900,000 community members in Chicago and western Cook County suburbs call home. It is an area with diverse and evolving populations, health opportunities, and health outcomes.



Zip codes in green represent our Legacy & Equity Zone, areas where community members experience the greatest health inequities.

Highly aligned organizations should meet the following criteria:

- At least 20% of the individuals served by aligned organizations must reside in our service region.
- Organizations whose work extends beyond our service area will be considered if they demonstrate strong alignment with our grantmaking priorities and actively engage with local communities.
- Priority consideration will be given to organizations with historical and/or existing strategic ties to our Legacy & Equity zip codes.

NOTE: For organizations who do not provide a direct service, including but not limited to, policy advocacy organizations and/or community media, “individuals served” refers to direct involvement with coalitions, partners, and/or local leaders within our service region.

WHAT WE LOOK FOR IN GRANTEE PARTNERS

HOW ALIGNED ORGANIZATIONS APPROACH THEIR WORK

INTERSECTIONAL APPROACHES TO ACHIEVING HEALTH EQUITY

We recognize that health equity and community health issues are complex and require strong collaboration and partnerships that are agile and accountable to communities served.

- Organizations demonstrate an understanding of how systemic inequities impact individuals and communities with intersecting identities (e.g., race, gender, age, ability) in their work.
- They are committed to continuously adapting their programs, services, and outreach to reflect community expertise and lived experience in addressing these intersections. Furthermore, internal processes and policies aim to enhance accessibility and inclusivity for community members in our service region.
- They demonstrate how they tailor their programs, services, outreach, and relationship-building in ways that reflect community members' expertise and experience in comprehensive and culturally affirming ways.

COMMUNITY-LED

We recognize that community leadership and expertise are necessary to address health and racial inequities, as they are closest to the issues and solutions.

Organizations demonstrate multiple strategies for actively centering community wisdom, expertise, and experience in advising, planning, executing, and evaluating their programs to build power and influence decision-making and policies.

EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL STEWARDSHIP

We recognize the value of local leaders in organizational leadership roles that address health and racial inequities due to their proximity to the issues and solutions.

- Organizations maintain robust policies and practices that reflect their organizational and fiscal health.
- They implement best practices, such as collecting demographic data of their board, staff, and participants, and share their strategies on how they aim to reflect the populations they serve.

SYSTEMS CHANGE

In public health, interventions to improve health occur at three levels: individual (downstream), community (mid-stream) and policy (upstream). We understand that not all organizations are involved at every level. Yet, we expect aligned organizations to articulate their role within broader efforts to address structural issues and have a grasp on how existing systems perpetuate current inequities.

- Organizations can articulate how they are connected to efforts that shift non-legislative policies or practices that will impact their communities' health.
- They can demonstrate deep partnerships with organizations, leaders, and communities in our service region and center their experience and expertise in decision-making.

GRANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

501(c)3 nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply for general operating support grants. Organizations that are not tax-exempt may apply with a fiscal sponsor.

POINTS TO CONSIDER

- Organizations can apply for funding up to 10% of their operating budget (using the current fiscal year expenses as a guide). Please note that stronger and more competitive proposals will request an amount that aligns with a regional health focus and programmatic rationale rather than a flat 10% budget request.
- At least 20% of individuals the applicant serves must reside in our service region. We will consider organizations whose work extends beyond our service area if they strongly align with our grantmaking strategy and close partnerships with local communities.
- For organizations with operating budgets greater than $30 million—including, but not limited to, hospitals and university systems—we will only award project support grants for initiatives that demonstrate strategic partnerships and a strong commitment to local communities in our service region.

Please refer to the FAQs on our website under the section "General Operating Support vs. Project Support: Requests from Larger Institutions" for more information.

WHAT WE DO NOT FUND FOR GENERAL OPERATING SUPPORT

- Businesses
- Capital campaigns*
- Conferences and one-day workshops
- Government entities
- Individuals
- National organizations not focused on our service region
- Operating foundations not directly connected to community-based efforts
- Partisan political activities
- Religious activities
- Scholarships or tuition
- School Districts and Individual Schools (incl. parent-teacher associations, charter schools, and nonprofits with more than 80% of expenses for school-based operations)

**Only capital expenses for materials will be considered for funding (i.e., medical equipment, dental chairs).*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & RESOURCES

INFORMATION TO GATHER TO COMPLETE THE LOI

- Board and Executive Director Demographics
- Participant Population:
  - This includes the total number and demographics of people served within our service region by your organization in 2023.
  - For organizations that do not provide direct services, including, but not limited to, policy advocacy organizations or community media, population estimates will suffice.
  - However, please highlight how your organization directly involves community members or other organizations in our service region in coalition work and/or leadership roles. This direct involvement is more meaningful than population numbers in zip codes which may passively benefit from your work.
- Top Five (5) zip codes in our service region where your organization serves
  - For organizations that do not provide direct services, including, but not limited to, policy advocacy organizations or community media, please highlight the five zip codes where your most critical partnerships, strategic focus, and/or strongest ties to community leadership reside.
- Current Budget
- Audit Documents

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & RESOURCES

QUICK TIPS WHEN USING OUR GRANTS PORTAL

- New applicants must create an organizational profile before applying.
- Returning applicants can update their organizational profile and contact information, if needed.
- We ask applicants to maintain only one account per organization. Please contact us if you experience a staff transition and/or need assistance accessing your account.
- Please click “Forgot My Password” on the grants portal homepage if you need a new password.
- If you experience technical issues or have questions about the grants portal, please email us at administration@hcfdn.org or call us at (708) 443-5674. If you send an email, please allow 1-2 business days for a response.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO YOUR APPLICATION

If you have questions about the alignment of your proposal with our grantmaking framework or have questions about our guidelines, please submit your question here.

OTHER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

We want to ensure you have what you need to complete your grant application. We encourage you to access the FAQs section on the "Apply for a 2024 Grant" page on our website to help answer any questions you may have.