

Grant Initiatives

Since March, the MetroWest Health Foundation has pivoted its grantmaking and operations to support the region's efforts to address the coronavirus pandemic. We have been in regular communication with grantees to assess their needs and the ways the foundation can be responsive. Early on we converted many existing grants to operating support, reduced reporting requirements and accelerated grant payments. The foundation also launched an emergency COVID-19 funding program; to date we have made 59 of these grants for a total of over \$400,000.

The need for funding has not diminished. To the contrary, many health issues have been exacerbated by the pandemic. As a result, the foundation has continued to pivot and is offering grants that seek to address issues in a more comprehensive way, beyond our emergency grants. In this fall grant round, the foundation has also shortened its application and the timeframe in order to streamline the process at a time when staff are already stretched thin meeting emergency needs.

The foundation is pleased to solicit proposals from eligible nonprofit and government organizations for the following grantmaking initiatives:

- COVID-19 Emotional Resilience
- COVID-19 Public Health Capacity Building
- COVID-19 Social Isolation Among Older Adults
- Vaping Prevention, Cessation and Education
- Health Equity

Application Information

Proposals must be submitted online and be received by the foundation by **4:00 p.m. on THURSDAY, September 24**. Instructions for the online application are available on the foundation's website at www.mwhealth.org. Incomplete or late proposals will not be considered for review.

Bidders Conference

The foundation will host a virtual bidders' conference with information on funding initiatives and the application process on **Wednesday, September 9**, from 2:00-3:00 p.m. Pre-registration is required. Please RSVP to rdonham@mwhealth.org by September 8.

Concept Papers/Calls

The foundation requires applicants to submit a one-page concept paper or call the foundation prior to a full proposal. Concept papers and calls help the foundation assess whether the proposed project is aligned with its funding priorities. Concept papers, along with an accompanying cover sheet, or calls must be completed by **4:00 p.m. September 11**. Please call or email Rebecca Donham at (508) 879-7625 or rdonham@mwhealth.org.

Foundation Support

Once a grant is made, foundation staff work with grantees to ensure that project outcomes are achievable and measurable, that grant activities are connected to larger community efforts to address area health needs, and that grantees have access to technical assistance and training to help them achieve success. The foundation also seeks to learn from each grant, using site visits and grantee reports to record lessons learned that can inform our work and that of future grantees. We encourage grantees to consider the foundation as a resource throughout the duration of the grant.

General Restrictions

The foundation supports programs that directly benefit the health of those who live and work in one of the 25 communities served by the foundation. Such support is limited to organizations that qualify as tax-exempt under Section 501(c)3 of the IRS Code, or organizations that are recognized as instrumentalities of state or local government.

The foundation does not provide grants to individuals, nor does it provide funds for endowments, fundraising drives and events, retirement of debt, operating deficits, projects that directly influence legislation, political activities or candidates for public office or programs that are customarily operated by hospitals in Massachusetts.

The foundation does not award grants to organizations that discriminate in the provision of services on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, age, ethnicity, marital status, disability, citizenship, sexual orientation or veteran status.

About the Foundation

The MetroWest Health Foundation's mission is to improve the health status of the community, its individuals and families through informed and innovative leadership. The foundation serves the following communities: Ashland, Bellingham, Dover, Framingham, Franklin, Holliston, Hopedale, Hopkinton, Hudson, Marlborough, Medfield, Medway, Mendon, Milford, Millis, Natick, Needham, Norfolk, Northborough, Sherborn, Southborough, Sudbury, Wayland, Wellesley and Westborough.

COVID-19 Emotional Resiliency Grants

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting isolation and economic downturn have negatively affected many people's mental health and exacerbated challenges for those already living with mental illness and substance use disorders. A June 2020 survey conducted for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that nearly 41% of respondents reported at least one adverse mental or behavioral health condition, including symptoms of trauma- and stressor-related disorder related to the pandemic (26.3%) and having started or increased substance use to cope with stress or emotions related to COVID-19 (13.3%)¹.

Certain populations may be more impacted by the stress of a crisis, including children and adolescents; parents and caregivers; individuals with preexisting medical and behavioral health conditions; socially isolated adults; individuals experiencing reduced employment; and racial and ethnic minorities.

Activities and Outcomes

The foundation seeks to support nonprofit and municipal agencies in improving the emotional resiliency of those they serve. Specifically, the foundation seeks grant proposals for the following new activities:

- Evidence- and research-based trauma/stress reduction programs such as Psychological First Aid and Emotional CPR
- Expansion of domestic violence outreach and services, especially to those for whom English is not their first language
- Resiliency promotion and stress reduction programs for children and adolescents
- Support groups and programs for parents/guardians and/or first responders
- Relapse prevention efforts for individuals with substance use disorders
- Mental health promotion programs, particularly for those who do not speak English as their primary language

Equity Focus

COVID-19 has highlighted vast disparities in health outcomes. Grant proposals must address how the proposed intervention will serve populations with high individual-level risk factors,

¹ Czeisler M&, Lane RI, Petrosky E, et al. Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, June 24–30, 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 2020;69:1049–1057. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6932a1external icon>

including but not limited to, people of color, those speaking a primary language other than English, uninsured individuals, and people in low income households.

Funding

The pandemic has required leaders and organizations to use new approaches to their work. As a result, the foundation will only support activities that are new or expanded. Providing existing services via videoconferencing does not constitute a new or expanded service.

The maximum grant amount is \$30,000. Grants are for one year.

COVID-19 Public Health Capacity Building Grants

Introduction

The MetroWest region has 25 local public health departments charged with ensuring the health and safety of their respective communities, including preventing the spread of communicable disease. The Massachusetts Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health issued a report in July 2019 that found multiple challenges to the public health system, including lack of staffing capacity, paucity of shared service agreements, limited data collection capability and inadequate funding.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only added to the duties and capacity challenges faced by local health departments. Local boards of health have undertaken critical activities related to COVID-19 including: the investigation of suspected cases; making testing recommendations; contact tracing; recommending and enforcing quarantine and isolation requirements; enforcing essential business orders and reopening guidance; and educating town officials, businesses, schools and residents. Local health departments have also served as communication hubs between local government and state public health officials.

Activities and Outcomes

The foundation seeks to support MetroWest municipal health departments in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the foundation seeks grant proposals from municipal government to support the following activities:

- Contact tracing, including personnel and technology costs
- Testing, including personnel, equipment & supplies, and publicity of testing sites
- Collaboration with public schools, including shared nursing services, assistance with testing and quarantine, and parent and staff communication
- Public education regarding COVID-19
- Purchase of protective equipment
- Data collection and reporting
- Planning for eventual vaccine distribution

Equity Focus

COVID-19 has highlighted vast disparities in health outcomes. Grant proposals must address how the proposed intervention will serve populations with high individual-level risk factors, including but not limited to, people of color, those speaking a primary language other than English, uninsured individuals, and people in low income households.

Funding

The foundation will entertain proposals from local municipalities for the following amounts*:

\$10,000	\$20,000	\$30,000
Dover	Ashland	Framingham
Holliston	Bellingham	Marlborough
Hopedale	Franklin	Milford
Medfield	Hopkinton	Natick
Medway	Hudson	Westborough
Mendon	Needham	
Millis	Northborough	
Norfolk	Sudbury	
Sherborn	Wayland	
Southborough	Wellesley	

*Funding amounts are based on a calculation of COVID-19-related community level risk factors including population size, presence of racial and ethnic minority populations, population below the poverty level, and degree of crowding in households.

Grants are for one year. The foundation encourages collaboration among communities and is open to joint community proposals.

COVID-19 Grants to Decrease Social Isolation Among Older Adults

Introduction

Social isolation among older adults has been an ongoing public health issue for many years. According to the CDC, social isolation in those over age 50 can lead to increased risk of premature death for all causes, similar to that of smoking and obesity; increased risk of dementia; and higher rates of depression and anxiety.² Some are more at-risk for social isolation, including LGBT older adults; immigrants, especially those for whom English is not their first language; and older adults of color.³

COVID-19 has led to stay-at-home recommendations for older adults as well as the closure of many spaces where older adults engage in recreational, volunteer and other activities. This, combined with a hesitancy on the part of many to visit children and grandchildren for fear of contracting the virus, has led to even more social isolation for many older adults in the MetroWest region. The effects are compounded by the uncertainty about when it will be safe to return to “normal” or what that “normal” will look like as re-opening becomes safe.

Councils on Aging and other agencies that provide opportunities for older adults to socialize are on the forefront of finding new and creative ways to engage the older adults they serve. The foundation is offering support to organizations that serve older adults to create and/or enhance virtual or other socially distanced programming to help decrease social isolation among this population. Technical assistance focused on sharing innovative interventions and best practices will be offered.

Activities and Outcomes

The foundation is seeking grant proposals from organizations who serve predominantly older adults that address the following objectives:

- 1. Create or enhance virtual or socially distanced programming for older adults and/or their caregivers that provides an opportunity to engage with others in a safe way.** This can include, but is not limited to, programming via meeting platforms (i.e. Zoom, Google Hangout, etc.), social media, telephone, or local cable TV or socially distanced in-person programs.
- 2. Improve access to technology so that older adults can engage in available programming from their homes.** This can include, but is not limited to, offering support on how to use devices and online programs or purchasing devices for those who could not otherwise afford a device.

² Centers for Disease Control. *Loneliness and Social Isolation Linked to Serious Health Conditions*. <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/lonely-older-adults.html>

³ Ibid.

Equity Focus

COVID-19 has highlighted vast disparities in health outcomes. Grant proposals must address how the proposed intervention will serve populations with high individual-level risk factors, including but not limited to, people of color, those speaking a primary language other than English, uninsured individuals, and people in low income households.

Funding

Grants are for a maximum of \$25,000 and will be funded for one year.

Youth Vaping Prevention, Cessation and Education Grants

Introduction

The reduction in youth smoking rates over the past 12 years is a public health success. According to the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey, 35% of high school youth in the region reported lifetime smoking in 2006 compared to just 12% in 2018, and current use of cigarettes among this age group dropped from 15% in 2006 to just 3% in 2018.⁴ However, over the past few years these gains are being reversed by drastic increases in youth e-cigarette use. According to the same 2018 survey, 41% of MetroWest high school students used e-cigarettes (“vaped”) in their lifetime compared to 28% in 2016 (the first year the survey measured e-cigarette use).⁵ Similarly, current e-cigarette use increased from 15% in 2016 to 28% in 2018.⁶ E-cigarettes contain high levels of nicotine and youth who vape are four times more likely to smoke conventional cigarettes than their peers who do not vape.⁷ Massachusetts has passed several laws restricting sales to youth under 21 as well as the sale of flavors that appeal to youth. In order to maximize the impact of these restrictions on youth tobacco use, it is also essential to continue and enhance comprehensive prevention efforts, offer cessation support and resources to youth, and educate all in the community, especially youth, caregivers and those working with youth about the negative long-term health impacts of e-cigarette use.

Activities and Outcomes

The foundation is seeking proposals from qualified organizations to provide **prevention, cessation and education programs or activities designed to decrease youth e-cigarette use**. Proposals can target youth, parents, educators and/or those who work with youth (i.e. coaches, out of school time program staff, etc.). They can be specific to one school district or agency, but collaborative approaches across municipal departments and agencies within a town/city or that include multiple towns/cities are encouraged. The foundation recognizes that COVID-19 has the potential for continued disruption of in-person school and out-of-school-time programming so creative approaches using technology and/or other socially distant practices will be given priority.

Funding can be used for developing comprehensive strategies to address youth vaping or to implement interventions. Programs should be grounded in best practices in youth tobacco prevention. See select resources below (*Note: this is not an exhaustive list and the foundation does not specifically endorse strategies or programs*).

⁴MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey: 2018 Regional Highlights Report. Grades 9-12. EDC.
<https://www.mwhealth.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Adolescent%20Health%20Survey%202018%20High%20School.pdf>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ The Truth Initiative: <https://truthinitiative.org/our-top-issues/vaping-issue>

Addressing Vaping: Strategies for Youth Prevention and Cessation:

<https://d2yy08d49bfqoo.cloudfront.net/documents/Vaping-Prevention-Strategies-2020.pdf>

Massachusetts Department of Public Health: The New Look of Nicotine Addiction:

<http://makesmokinghistory.org/dangers-of-vaping/>

Stanford Medicine: Tobacco Prevention Toolkit:

<https://med.stanford.edu/tobaccopreventiontoolkit.html>

Equity Focus

Equity should factor into all program design decisions, including efforts to ensure that materials and modes of delivery are culturally appropriate for all youth and parents/caregivers, especially people of color and those that speak a primary language other than English.

Funding

Grants are for a maximum of \$30,000. Funds cannot be used for equipment, such as vaping detectors and cameras. Grants are made for one year.

Health Equity

Introduction

The foundation is putting health equity at the core of our efforts to improve health in the region. Grant funding focused on organizational development is a key strategy to promote equity.

COVID-19 has highlighted vast disparities in health outcomes. The five communities in the MetroWest region that have consistently had the highest case rates per 100,000 are those with high percentages of foreign-born residents; people of color; households below poverty level and those speaking languages other than English at home.⁸ There has also been increased awareness and activism around structural racism in the nation and locally. The foundation's belief is that all of us working together toward common equity goals as well as doing work as individual agencies to ensure that all organizational and programmatic decisions are made through an equity lens, will have the greatest long-term impact on decreasing health inequities in the region.

With these foundational beliefs as the framework, grants in this category are designed to help agencies further build capacity to systematically address health inequities in MetroWest.

For more information on the foundation's health equity strategy and ongoing work, see the Health Equity section of our website at <https://mwhealth.org/strategic-investments/health-equity>.

Activities and Outcomes

The foundation is seeking grant proposals from qualified organizations that address the following objectives:

1. Develop and implement organizational Health Equity Plans. Support for creating a plan to advance health equity within your agency or to implement aspects of a plan that has been developed. The plan should include input from key stakeholders including those utilizing services; staff; volunteers; senior management; and the Board of Directors. For an example of components to include in your plan see the foundation's [Building Inclusive Communities Guidebook](#) (page 17).

2. Support for development and implementation of health equity training and education programs. Internal training for boards, staff and volunteers as well as community-wide education programs will be considered.

⁸ *The Impact of COVID-19 on MetroWest.* <https://d2yy08d49bfqoo.cloudfront.net/images/Impact-of-COVID19-on-MetroWest.pdf>

3. Capacity building grants to support agencies led by people of color working on issues of health equity in their communities. Support to improve sustainability and increase the reach of agencies led by people representative of the populations they serve. Some examples of capacity building are strategic planning and growth; professional development for staff and/or volunteers; improving financial systems; improving or creating evaluation systems; and board development. Agencies led by people of color are defined as agencies with people of color in leadership positions on the board and staff levels, as well as involved in the design, delivery and evaluation of services.

Funding

Grants are for a maximum of \$30,000. Grants are made for one year.