

Grant Initiatives

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

- Girls' Mental Health
- Improving Health Equity
- Health and Housing Stability
- Innovative Action to Address Community Health Priorities

Application Information

Proposals must be submitted online and be received by the foundation by **4:00 p.m. on Friday, March 29**. 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.

Concept Papers

The foundation uses concept papers as a way of initiating a conversation with applicants about whether the request is a good fit with current funding initiatives. For all initiatives except the Community Health Assessment, concept papers include a one-page summary, a cover sheet and a logic model. For the Community Health Assessment, applicants should read the instructions found on page 7. For all initiatives, required documents must be submitted no later than Friday, March 15. The foundation strongly encourages applicants to submit their concept papers in advance of this deadline to allow for timely feedback. Concept papers and/or questions should be directed to the following program officer:

- For Girls' Mental Health grants:
 - Rebecca Donham, rdonham@mwhealth.org, (508) 879-7625 x202
- For Improving Health Equity & Health and Housing Stability grants:
 - Rebecca Gallo, rgallo@mwhealth.org, (508) 879-7625 x207

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.

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.

Girls' Mental Health

Introduction

According to the 2021 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey, there have been considerable and concerning increases in anxiety, depressive symptoms, self-injury and suicidal ideation among MetroWest adolescents since 2018. These increases are disproportionately driven by higher reports among females. Girls are more than twice as likely as boys to report mental health problems, with disparities increasing in recent surveys, particularly for suicidal thoughts and behaviors. In addition, girls report more cyberbullying victimization, less sleep and higher usage of social media than boys, behaviors that are negatively correlated with mental health.

Activities and Outcomes

The foundation is seeking grant proposals from schools, municipalities and community-based agencies that promote healthy lifestyles and environments that enable girls to manage stress, anxiety and depression. These could include responsible social media use/social media literacy; self-efficacy skills development; healthy habits, such as sleep, nutrition and exercise; and cyberbullying prevention and peer support enhancement.

Funding

Schools and youth-serving agencies are eligible to apply for up to \$30,000 for one year. Funding can be used for consultation, curriculum materials, program/activity supplies, staff time and other direct program expenses.

Grantees will be expected to participate in periodic technical assistance convenings. Applications involving schools must include a letter signed by the superintendent indicating support of the request.

Additional Opportunity

The foundation is committed to working with the community to improve the emotional health of girls. To this end, in addition to immediate funding to support girls in the region, the foundation plans to build on the learnings from the series of forums held over the past year on the topic. Foundation staff will convene nonprofit and municipal partners invested in girls' emotional health to better understand current initiatives and collectively frame potential longer-term investments from the foundation. If you are interested in being part of these conversations, please reach out to Rebecca Gallo (rgallo@mwhealth.org) or Rebecca Donham (rdonham@mwhealth.org).

Improving Health Equity

Introduction

Reducing health inequities is essential to improving overall health outcomes in the region. While we recognize there are many health disparities in the region, the foundation is focusing on five issue areas where they are significantly impacting health outcomes in the region. Proposals must identify the specific disparities within one of the focus areas the project seeks to address and include a targeted plan to reach communities most impacted by the identified health disparity.

Activities and Outcomes

The foundation is seeking grant proposals from organizations that address health inequities in one of the following areas:

1. Maternal health outcomes: Requests can include but are not limited to programs that provide support to women/birthing people while pregnant and in the first year after giving birth; training for professionals who support women/birthing people while pregnant and in the first year after giving birth; education campaigns designed to raise community awareness.
2. Access to primary and specialty care: Requests can include but are not limited to projects that reduce transportation barriers, linguistic barriers and improve care coordination.
3. Vaccine Equity: Requests can include activities such as outreach, education, or vaccine clinics that increase access to all recommended vaccines for children and adults.
4. Health Insurance Enrollment: Requests should include activities that result in assisting residents in enrolling or maintaining health insurance. This can include staff/volunteer training, outreach to populations with lower insurance enrollment rates or assisting individuals in completing applications.
5. Chronic Disease Prevention: Requests can include but are not limited to programs that provide education on preventing or managing chronic disease, decreasing barriers to healthy habits or increasing awareness of chronic disease prevention.

Funding

The maximum grant amount is \$25,000 for one year.

Health and Housing Stability

Introduction

Housing costs are a major financial burden for MetroWest residents of all ages and demographic backgrounds. Affordable and safe housing is essential to a healthy life. Impacts on health can be direct, such as lead paint and mold increasing cases of childhood asthma or neurological conditions or deteriorating building conditions leading to preventable falls. Neighborhood safety and resources also impact health. For instance, neighborhoods without access to safe, accessible green space make it more difficult for those of all ages to exercise, which can lead to higher rates of obesity-related illness. In addition, lack of grocery stores or transportation can make it far more difficult to access healthy food or medical care.

The focus of this funding is seeking to mitigate the impact on older adults, families with children, and newly arrived immigrants and refugee populations. The UMass Boston Elder Index ([Homepage | Elder Index](#)) calculates that in order for a single older adult, who is renting their home in Middlesex County to meet their basic needs, they need over \$41,000 a year, which is 144% of the national average. Even for those who own their home with no mortgage, they need over \$31,000 a year to meet basic needs, which is 133% of the national average. The cost of housing and other basic needs, like food, are rising. For older adults on a fixed income, maintaining their home or paying market rate rental prices is unsustainable.

The high cost of housing and of living in the region also makes it challenging for families and newly arrived immigrants to afford basic needs. There has been an increase in families from all backgrounds seeking temporary shelter because they are unable to afford rising rents. This means an increase in the need for support services and basic healthcare.

Activities and Outcomes

The foundation is seeking grant proposals to address one of the following objectives:

1. Support to agencies working to prevent evictions, assist unhoused individuals in meeting basic needs and navigating systems and support families in obtaining housing subsidies and locating affordable housing options.
2. Decrease housing insecurity among older adults: Requests can include but are not limited to projects that provide support services to help older adults stay in their homes.
3. Increase support services to families with children and newly arrived immigrant populations residing in temporary housing in the MetroWest region.

Funding

The maximum grant amount is \$30,000 for one year. The foundation will not pay for rental assistance or resident home repairs.

Innovative Action to Address Community Health Priorities

Introduction

The foundation conducted a [Community Health Assessment](#) in 2023 to identify and prioritize the health needs of the region. This work is built on previous health assessments and incorporated a deeper examination of the social determinants of health and health equity. Data from the assessment included primary data collection from three sources: a community health survey offered in three languages that was completed by over 1000 residents; seven focus groups that collected input from approximately 40 community members; and ten key informant interviews. Public health data was also analyzed to summarize key indicators and describe relevant trends and disparities.

In this funding initiative, the foundation seeks to invest in the planning, development and implementation of solutions to the health challenges prioritized in the Community Health Assessment. These funds are not general operating support or designed to fund established programming. This is an investment in creative and innovative approaches with the potential to significantly impact the health of the region. Given true change is difficult to attain alone, and impossible without authentic community engagement, collaboration is strongly encouraged.

Phone Calls & Letters of Inquiry

The foundation is committed to investing long-term in addressing the health needs prioritized in the Community Health Assessment. Therefore, the funding amount, timelines and process for this initiative differ from others listed in this RFP. Organizations with experience in working on one of the health priorities identified in the Assessment with a proposal idea should call the foundation (508-879-7625) and speak with Rebecca Donham (mental health, substance use and the built and natural environment) or Rebecca Gallo (food insecurity and housing/homelessness) about your idea before submitting anything in writing.

If there is mutual agreement to proceed after the phone call, you should submit a letter of inquiry briefly answering the following questions in no more than 2 pages.

1. What priority area(s) is the focus of your initiative?
2. What is your approach? Why do you think it will be successful?
3. How will you engage those most impacted by the issue?
4. What partners do you need to make this successful?

Foundation staff will review letters and invite a small number of organizations to submit full proposals. The funding amount and length of funding will depend on the initiative. If

you are invited to submit a full proposal, foundation staff will work with you to determine the request amount and duration.