

Grant Initiatives

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

- Addressing the Emotional Health and Resilience Children and Youth
- Addressing Community Public Health Issues
- Responsive Grants

Application Information

Proposals must be submitted online and be received by the foundation by **4:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 13**. 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 requires applicants to submit a one-page concept paper plus logic model prior to a full proposal. Concept papers help the foundation assess whether the proposed project is aligned with its funding priorities. Concept papers, along with an accompanying cover sheet, must be submitted by Friday, September 30. 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 Emotional Health and Responsive Grants:
Rebecca Donham, rdonham@mwhealth.org, (508) 879-7625 x202
- For Community Public Health 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.

Addressing the Emotional Health & Resilience of Children & Youth

Introduction

Increases in mental health issues among MetroWest youth are consistent with recent state and national reports of elevated depressive symptoms among youth during COVID-19.[1] The increase in self-injury and suicidality, particularly among girls, is consistent with reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which indicate a 51% increase in suspected suicide attempt visits to hospital emergency departments from 2019 to 2021 among girls ages 12-17, and a 4% increase among boys.[2]

According to the 2021 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey, 27% of high school students reported depressive symptoms and 15.6% had considered suicide in the past 12 months. While there are increases in depressive symptoms and self-injury among both sexes, these increases are greater among females. For example, depressive symptoms increased from 25% in 2018 to 36% in 2021 among females, and from 14% to 17% among males. Reports of self-injury follow a similar pattern. Suicidal ideation and attempts have increased notably among females; seriously considering suicide increased from 16% in 2018 to 20% in 2021 among females but was only slightly higher among males. Given these trends, females are more than twice as likely as males to report mental health problems, with disparities increasing in recent surveys, particularly for suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

While much work is being done to address mental health treatment capacity within the state, the foundation is interested in projects that bolster the emotional health and resilience of youth outside of traditional mental health delivery systems.

Activities and Outcomes

The foundation is seeking grant proposals from schools and agencies that serve children and adolescents that address one of the following objectives:

1. **Promote Emotional Health & Resilience.** To foster connection and emotional health, the foundation will fund schools and nonprofit organizations to offer new programs designed to:
 - create meaningful connections between youth and caring adults and/or among youth. Examples could include new youth activities overseen by respected adults, formal adult-youth mentorships, and intergenerational programs for youth and older adults.
 - offer age-appropriate groups that teach emotional resiliency skills. Examples could include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or Dialectical Behavioral Therapy skills groups, support groups, and groups focused on managing stress.

- promote leadership, empowerment, and positive self-esteem. Examples could include speakers' series, youth-led social change activities, and youth advisory councils
- Tools and programs to support parents and caregivers in understanding and responding to the emotional needs of youth.

2. **Address Disparities in Girls' Mental Health.** According to the 2021 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey, high school girls report more cyberbullying victimization, less sleep and higher usage of social media than boys. Correlations between these factors and mental health are borne out by the 2021 data as well. Given the disproportionate rise in poorer mental health in MetroWest girls, the foundation is seeking to support programs that promote healthy lifestyles and environments that enable girls to manage stress, anxiety, and depression. These include the following:

- Responsible social media use/social media literacy. For example, About-Face, a California-based program, has been found to reduce girls' need to look like people in media and increase their self-esteem and self-respect.
- Healthy habits (sleep, nutrition, and exercise). For example, COPE (Creating Opportunities for Personal Empowerment) seeks to improve the mental health and healthy lifestyle behaviors in at-risk populations.
- Cyberbullying prevention and peer support enhancement. Peer support can include befriending programs, peer mediation and active listening skills development.

Funding

Schools and youth-serving agencies are eligible to apply for up to \$50,000 per year for up to two years. 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 submit a letter signed by the superintendent indicating support of the request.

Addressing Community Public Health Issues

Introduction

The impact of larger public health issues on the MetroWest region is evident. There are numerous issues that have gained increased attention, such as gun violence, reproductive rights, maternal and infant health disparities, domestic violence, disease prevention and the impact of climate change. While Massachusetts has implemented policies to mitigate some of the negative impacts of these challenges, more can be done to address these issues within local communities.

While there are many agencies nationally and state-wide addressing broader public health issues, the foundation is interested in locally-organized approaches from those who have strong ties and relationships in the region. Applicants should demonstrate a commitment to collaboration with other agencies, as well as show a plan to engage community members most impacted by the issue. They should also clearly state why the particular issue is a public health concern in the region. Collaborative applications are encouraged.

Activities and Outcomes

The foundation is seeking grant proposals from agencies engaging in community-based work that address one of the following objectives:

1. **Community organizing to address larger public health issues.** The core of addressing large issues locally is engaging the broader community, in particular those most negatively impacted by the issue. Proposed initiatives should have a clear engagement strategy, as well as articulate what will change in the short and long term if the initiative is successful. Applicants must have an established presence in the community where the work will take place.
2. **Coalition Building and/or Collaborative Planning,** including developing or expanding existing coalitions working in the community on larger public health issues and bringing together professionals and community members in a collective impact process to jointly create new ways of addressing larger public health issues.

Funding

Nonprofit and municipal agencies are eligible to apply for up to \$30,000 for one year with the potential for renewal.

Responsive Grants

Introduction

The foundation will award a limited number of responsive grants that address pressing health and organizational needs not included in its other categories.

Activities and Outcomes

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

Respond to new and emerging health issues. This could include but is not limited to, addressing vaccine hesitancy or barriers, new patterns or trends in substance use in the region, and the health needs of recently-arrived immigrants.

Capacity building activities. This could include but is not limited to, workforce recruitment, training, and retention; strategic planning; data collection and evaluation activities; and enhanced efforts to reach hard-to-serve populations.

Funding

The maximum grant amount is \$20,000. Grants are for one year only and are not eligible for continuation funding.