

Grant Initiatives

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

- Girls' Mental Health
- Youth-Driven Health and Wellness
- Health and Housing Stability
- Community Health Innovation
- Capacity Building

Application Information

Proposals must be submitted online and be received by the foundation by **4:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 30**. 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 a 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, March 10. 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 and Youth-Driven Health and Wellness grants:
 - Rebecca Donham, rdonham@mwhealth.org, (508) 879-7625 x202
- For Health and Housing Stability, Community Health Innovation and Capacity Building 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 and 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; 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 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 include a letter signed by the superintendent indicating support of the request.

Youth-Driven Health and Wellness

Introduction

The foundation's biennial MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey has been monitoring trends in adolescent health and risk behaviors since 2006. MetroWest school districts have used the data to make policy changes, implement new programs and provide training to school staff. The foundation is interested in furthering this work by giving youth the authority and voice to design and implement strategies to bring about positive change. The report *Youth Civic Engagement and Health, Wellbeing and Safety: A Review of Research* found that "when young people have a chance to identify social issues they are passionate about and have the opportunity to take action to address them, they both contribute to society and reap individual benefits."

Activities and Outcomes

The foundation is seeking grant proposals from public middle and high schools in MetroWest for youth-led projects to improve student health and wellness. Efforts must address one of the behaviors covered in the 2021 MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey, including substance use, impaired driving, violence, bullying/cyberbullying, mental health, sexual behaviors, physical activity, online behaviors, and sleep. Preference will be given to projects that address disparities and promote health equity among girls, students of color, students with disabilities, LGBTQ students, students whose first language is not English and new students to the U.S.

Projects must have an adult mentor within the school and be approved by the school principal and superintendent. The work, however, should be youth driven and led. Projects may be undertaken by an existing group or club but the work must reflect new strategies and efforts to address specific behaviors of the survey.

Funding

Schools are eligible to apply for up to \$10,000 for one year. Funding can be used for speakers, supplies, memberships, trainings, and stipends, among other items. Priority will be given to comprehensive projects that are implemented over the course of the grant period rather than one-time events. Applications involving schools must include a letter signed by the superintendent indicating support of the request.

Health and Housing Stability

Introduction

The foundation recently released *Shut Out: Understanding the Affordable Housing Crisis in MetroWest*. It provides data on housing supply, cost and stability in the region. The data show that housing costs are pricing many out of the region. In many of the region's communities, someone would need to earn over \$50/hr. to afford fair market rent on a 2-bedroom apartment. In addition, the Latinx and Black population in the region are more likely to face housing cost burdens and less likely to own homes. Older adults on fixed incomes are increasingly having more difficulty paying for taxes and repairs if they own their home or affording rent if they do not receive subsidies. All of these factors, combined with insufficient housing stock in the region has created unstable housing for too many.

Stable housing leads to improved physical and mental health outcomes.¹ Housing costs are a major driver of economic insecurity in MetroWest, with the cost of housing outpacing the growth of incomes. Households who pay more than 30% of their income on housing range from approximately 15-77% of renters in the region's communities and 16-36% of those with a mortgage.² These numbers do not include most who live in subsidized housing, who may also be at higher risk of housing instability or even homelessness.

There are many factors that lead to housing instability, including lack of affordable housing options; working a lower-wage job; lack of affordable childcare; health and disability issues; and many more. And while the root causes of housing instability are systemic and require long-term structural solutions, there are strategies that can add to housing stability and conditions for residents. The focus of this RFP is on coalition building focused on long-term needs and immediate strategies to increase housing stability.

The link to *Shut Out* is: <https://tinyurl.com/Shut-Out-Housing-Report>

Activities and Outcomes

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

1. **Implement one or more recommendations from *Shut Out: Understanding the affordable housing crisis in MetroWest*:** Forming or expanding the reach of existing coalitions to collectively plan for and implement long-term strategies to improve

¹ Health Starts at Home Evaluation Report (2021). The Boston Foundation. [hsah-may-2021-report527_v4.pdf](https://tinyurl.com/hsah-may-2021-report527_v4.pdf) ([tbf.org](https://tinyurl.com/tbf.org))

² Understanding Economic Insecurity in MetroWest (September 2021). MetroWest Health Foundation. [PowerPoint Presentation \(d2yy08d49bfqoo.cloudfront.net\)](https://tinyurl.com/PowerPointPresentation-d2yy08d49bfqoo.cloudfront.net)

housing affordability; improving housing stability for residents most at-risk of losing current housing through education and advocacy, case management and/or on-site supports; and supports related to shared housing models.

2. **Foster Self-Sufficiency:** Create conditions that help individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency by focusing on employment and education supports and support, peer support and social connections.

A crucial component of any plan or intervention is the genuine engagement and leadership of those most affected- in this case, those experiencing housing instability. Proposals should include concrete ways this engagement will take place.

Funding

The maximum grant amount is \$25,000 a year for two years. The foundation will not pay for rental or utility assistance, real estate development costs or resident home repairs.

Community Health Innovation

Introduction

The MetroWest region is one of the healthiest in the state, yet inequities in health outcomes persist. Health status still depends too much on one's zip code, race, education and income. Significant challenges remain in addressing systemic issues around capacity, access and opportunity.

The foundation's Community Public Health Innovation Grants are designed to identify and invest in the planning and implementation of ideas and strategies that can address some of the persistent health challenges facing our region. This grant program is an opportunity for area organizations, policy makers and individuals most affected by a health issue, to collectively engage in a problem-solving process that will lead to more effective, equitable and sustainable solutions. ***This program is to engage in a "rethinking" process that allows applicants to collaboratively examine issues, generate innovative ideas and develop a plan for how the innovation could be achieved and scaled. If a comprehensive process has taken place, funds can be used to implement pieces of the plan.***

The foundation believes that the best way to achieve significant and lasting improvements in community health is through cross-sector collaboration. By working together, in an open and meaningful way, stakeholders can reframe and fundamentally disrupt systems that perpetuate health inequities.

Activities and Outcomes

The foundation seeks to support a lead nonprofit or municipal agency acting on behalf of a group of collaborative partners (i.e., government, business, community, religious, educational, and grassroots groups). The intent of these grants is to support an authentic and inclusive planning process leading to innovative ideas and strategies addressing one of the following objectives:

1. **Engage in a targeted planning process designed to find innovative ways to address a specific health issue:** The project should include at least three partner entities, representing different sectors. They do not all need to be included in the application phase, but a strong application will have letters of collaboration from partners. In addition, a plan for recruiting and engaging those most affected by the issue should be outlined. Preference will be given to collaboratives whose focus is on changing systems that contribute to health inequity as well as those that focus on the populations most likely to experience health inequalities. These include people of color, individuals who are experiencing homelessness, those affected

by mental health and/or substance use disorders, members of the LGBTQ community, immigrants, and others who encounter health inequities.

2. **Implement projects or recommendations that resulted from a comprehensive planning process:** The planning process, including who was involved and how they will continue to be involved, must be outlined in the application. The planning process must have included multiple partner entities and those most impacted by the issue being addressed.

Funding

The maximum amount of the grant is \$50,000 a year with the possibility for renewal based on results.

Organizational Capacity Building

Introduction

Recent challenges, including COVID-19, have strengthened collaboration and innovative ways nonprofit and municipal agencies work together to solve immediate community needs. These challenges have also pushed agencies to their full capacity. Growing capacity is essential to strengthening the region's safety net programming, promoting overall health and improving health equity.

Capacity building grants are designed to enhance the systems within an organization to operate more efficiently; better reach those most affected by the issue being addressed; define needs and strategies; and train staff and volunteers.

Eligible organizations must have a primary focus on health and/or social services in the region.

Activities and Outcomes

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

- 1. Professional development for staff and/or volunteers.** Training for staff with the goal of retention and creating career ladders for staff is encouraged. Any education programming designed to improve the ability of those working on behalf of the agency to perform their duties will be considered. *Examples: tuition reimbursement; leadership training; mentoring; technical training; license test prep*
- 2. Organizational planning.** This encompasses any planning with the goal of improving services. This can include, but is not limited to, strategic planning; succession planning; recruitment and retention plans; program design or planning for deeper collaboration or mergers between agencies. *Examples: Developing more equitable hiring practices; developing/implementing strategies for staff retention and career ladders; hiring consultant to assess potential for multiple agencies to share services or merge*
- 3. Increasing capacity to better serve hard-to-reach populations.** This can include marketing/communications plans and activities; creative outreach campaigns or other strategies to serve those most affected by the issue being addressed. *Examples: Developing or scaling campaign (media, referral, word of mouth, etc.) to reach populations currently underserved by your agency; analyzing and improving internal conditions (i.e. welcoming space, staff/volunteers who represent the community, offering programming in multiple languages, etc.) to better serve hard-to-reach populations*

Funding

The maximum grant amount is \$20,000 for one year. The foundation will not fund operating expenses or staff salaries under this initiative.