



COMMUNITY RESPONSIVE GRANTS (CRG) PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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PROGRAM FOCUS AND GOALS

1.Q: Do proposals need to align with one of the Foundation’s strategies, or just the broader goals?

A: While a proposal is not required to address a specific MeHAF *strategy*, it must align with one or more of [MeHAF’s four goal areas](#), as described in the [CRG program criteria](#).

2.Q: Can you elaborate on MeHAF goal #4?

A: MeHAF’s goal, “Promote shared leadership to achieve equitable health outcomes for everyone in Maine,” is based on the recognition that long-term change is possible when we develop, support and collaborate with partners across the state and help to build leaders from within communities. Work under this goal area supports leadership development initiatives of others that promotes access to care and equitable outcomes, and also includes MeHAF’s internally focused efforts on developing our own leadership diversity and capacity to support and advance equitable health outcomes.

3.Q: You describe CRG as a companion program to the Systems Improvement and Innovation Responsive Grants (SIIRG) program. Would you describe the difference in the purpose of the two programs?

A: The CRG program was developed to fund *community-led* projects that align with the foundation’s four broad goal areas and seek to change systems, policies, practices, and perceptions that create barriers to health care and good health and that advance equity. CRG applicants are expected to demonstrate that members of the community will have meaningful leadership and decision-making roles throughout the project. The purpose of the SIIRG program is to support innovative community-informed, though not necessarily community-led, projects to improve health services and access to care in four narrower strategy areas: rural health, aging/older adults, behavioral health, and maternal and child health. SIIRG applicants are expected to demonstrate that they have mechanisms in place to hear from and respond to the communities their project seeks to benefit. In addition, SIIRG applicants are expected to demonstrate that they have the ability, either directly or through structured partnerships, to effect changes in the systems of care and services that they are seeking to improve.

4.Q: Can you provide examples of past CRG grantee projects to give a sense of the work this program supports?

A: The CRG program is now in its fourth grant cycle. You can find a complete list of the 2019, 2021, and 2022 CRG Project profiles [by clicking here](#). These are only intended to serve as examples of the kinds of projects funded under this program in the two grant cycles to date. The types of projects to be funded in 2023, the topic areas, geographic reach, etc. will be dependent upon the pool and diversity of applications we receive this year, and as a result may look very different.

ELIGIBILITY

5.Q: What kinds of organizations can receive grants?

A: The following organization types are eligible to receive MeHAF grant funding:

- 501(c)(3) tax-exempt public charity
- Federally recognized tribe
- Governmental or other public, non-profit entity (such as a university)

Organizations that have not yet attained 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status are not eligible to receive a MeHAF grant. Individuals and private foundations are also not eligible for MeHAF grants.

6.Q: My organization does not have tax-exempt status or our tax-exempt status is pending. Do I need a fiscal sponsor?

A: Yes. If your community would like to apply but your organization is not eligible, please consider looking for a fiscal sponsor – an organization that meets the eligibility criteria and is connected to your community and willing to serve in this role. As a fiscal sponsor, that organization must agree, in writing, to provide certain fiduciary and financial management functions and to seek grants under its exempt status to support your organization’s work. If you are working with a fiscal sponsor, you are responsible for having that relationship in place before an application is submitted. The fiscal sponsor will be the organization that submits the LOI application and that ultimately receives the grant. For those applying as a fiscal sponsor for another organization, they must submit a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining the fiscal sponsor relationship. The grant check will go to the fiscal sponsor, which will distribute the grant on your behalf and will retain all fiduciary responsibility for ensuring grant funds are properly spent and other grant requirements are met. If you have not previously worked with a fiscal sponsor to apply for a MeHAF grant, please contact Program Officer [Frank Martinez Nocito](#), or call at (207) 620-8266, ext. 116, for guidance on the process prior to starting an LOI. If you will be working with a fiscal sponsor, that organization must be the grant applicant.

7.Q: How many applications can we submit?

A: Eligible organizations may submit only one application for CRG (either a planning or implementation proposal). For government entities, universities, and large nonprofits such as health care systems, a department or division may be considered a separate organization. If you have questions about how this may apply to your organization, please contact [Frank Martinez Nocito](#) prior to submitting your LOI.

8.Q: Are current grantees in other MeHAF programs eligible to apply for a CRG grant?

A: Yes, current grantees under any of MeHAF’s other programs are eligible to apply for a Community Responsive Grant.

9.Q: Can my organization apply for a CRG grant in 2023 if we received a grant last year?

A: Yes. Existing 2-year CRG grantees can apply for a different project, but cannot apply to get a second grant for the same work they are already doing (i.e., to increase the funds available for the existing project in its second year).

10.Q: We have a collaborative project that we would like to undertake with a fellow nonprofit organization and/or community members. Is that eligible?

A: Yes. MeHAF encourages collaboration. One organization should submit the application as the lead organization on behalf of the collaborative partners. Please note that there is an expectation that resources (funding) will be shared among all of the partners.

11.Q: I've reviewed all the program information but am still not sure if my organization or project is eligible. How can I find out if I should apply for a CRG?

A: We encourage you to contact [Frank Martinez Nocito](#) for clarification regarding any questions about your eligibility to apply, and/or to discuss whether your project seems like a good fit for this program.

12.Q: Will MeHAF consider making a grant to support an ongoing program or service while an organization waits to secure a more sustainable funding source?

A: No. The CRG program is not intended to provide this or other types of “gap funding” to support ongoing programs or services.

13.Q: If my LOI is not selected to move forward to the full proposal stage, can I request a meeting with a MeHAF staff member to get feedback on my application?

A: Yes, MeHAF encourages applicants to reach out to Program Officers at any time during or after the application process with questions. Applicants whose LOI applications are not selected to move on to the second stage of the process will receive an email on **Tuesday, July 18** notifying them of the reviewer decision. All applicants are encouraged to schedule a debrief call with MeHAF staff to receive feedback on their application, to ask questions, and to offer MeHAF feedback on the process from the applicant perspective. Notification emails will provide follow up information about scheduling a de-brief meeting.

14.Q: How many LOI applications do you anticipate will be approved and invited to submit full applications?

A: The number of LOI applications that advance to the full proposal stage of the grant process is, in part, contingent upon the number of total LOIs received and the total 2023 CRG program budget.

PROJECT INFORMATION

15.Q: For the purposes of the CRG program, how are you defining “community”?

A: As we use it here, “community” is not necessarily tied to a place. This term can mean a group that has a shared identity, a common cause, common geographic location, similar health and health access needs, or other shared experiences or characteristics. Some examples are Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), immigrants, refugees and migrants, LGBTQ+, older people, people experiencing homelessness, people experiencing incarceration, people with low incomes, and people with disabilities.

16.Q: Can the work I am proposing include identifying community-led issues/creation of an advisory board or should that be in place?

A: A planning grant may include developing specific approaches to the issues to be addressed, creating an advisory group, or similar activities. However, proposals that reflect existing engagement from and leadership by the community will likely be more competitive per the scoring guidelines.

17.Q: What is the difference between a planning and an implementation grant?

A: A planning grant supports a collaborative process of exploring and developing ideas that will form a plan of action or project concept that could be implemented. An implementation grant supports carrying out a project that has a clear and specific action plan already developed, with existing leadership from the community(ies) of focus, and is ready to move forward. If you are unsure which grant type is most appropriate for your project, please see page 3 of the RFP for further distinctions, or contact [Frank Martinez Nocito](#) to discuss. Once your application is submitted, you cannot change the type of grant you are applying for.

18.Q: Can the timeframe for a project be less than 12 months?

A: Yes. The grant period for a planning grant and a 1-year implementation grant may be no more than 12 months. A 2-year implementation grant may be no more than 24 months.

19.Q: Does our proposed project need to be a new activity, or can this funding be used to support existing agency programs?

A: Proposed projects may be entirely new or may be based on work that an organization has already been doing. This may be your own organization's work or that of others working in your community. Pilot projects can also be funded.

20.Q: What should I do if the contact information on my organization's grant account has changed and needs to be updated?

A: If the contact information on an existing organization grant account needs to be updated and/or an individual needs to be added to the account to support the submission of a grant application, please contact [Holly Irish](#) (Grants Manager) as soon as possible, for assistance.

21.Q: Can my organization apply for general operating support or for funds to support capacity-building?

A: No. The CRG program provides project-specific funding and will not make grants for general operating support or organizational capacity-building. Other exclusions are: direct care costs, clinical, academic or graduate research, capital expenditures, fundraising and endowments, legislative lobbying efforts or political campaigns, scholarships, sectarian or religious purposes, and projects that do not benefit people living in Maine.

22.Q: If an application submitted in response to a different MeHAF Request for Proposals was denied, can the applicant resubmit that proposal for a Community Responsive Grant?

A: Yes. An applicant should make the determination as to whether the work previously proposed is a good fit for this opportunity based on the CRG RFP/Grant Guidelines. The proposal will likely need to be modified to respond to the questions specific to the CRG program criteria.

23.Q: Is it reasonable for implementation grantees to expect to spend some time up-front on planning? What are the expectations around "hitting the ground running" for the implementation grants?

A: We understand that projects will need some time to prepare. While there is no hard and fast expectation, a general guideline would be that projects would begin implementation within 90 days of the grant award.

24.Q: Does the LOI preliminary budget narrative and full proposal budget (if invited) need to be the same? Or will a change result in a "ding" (a negative) against you?

A: At the LOI stage no budget is required, though a preliminary budget narrative is part of the application. We only need a brief description of the types of expenses you intend to use MeHAF grant funds to support. The total requested grant amount cannot change from the LOI to the Full Proposal stages. This is because decisions are made about how many applicants to invite to the full proposal stage based on total requested amounts from each applicant. However, the details may shift. Part of the reason we are requesting budgetary information at the LOI phase of the process is to ensure that the types of expenses align with MeHAF budget guidance (e.g., capital expenses are not supported). If the intended uses of funds change significantly from the LOI to the Full Proposal phase it may prompt clarifying questions and a follow-up conversation between MeHAF and the applicant.

25.Q: Can you define direct care costs?

A: Direct care costs are paying for the provision of health care services for an individual or group. The rationale for this is two-fold. First, MeHAF is prohibited by our by-laws from supplanting other sources of funding/payment (government, insurance, etc.). Second, grants are intended to help grantees transform care and services in ways that are more efficient, coordinated, and cost-effective so communities can benefit for many years, rather than to support delivery of service for a temporary time period to a limited group of individuals with no means of continuing those services once the grant funds are depleted.

26.Q: Does the MeHAF grants portal auto-save my draft application?

A: Yes, the grants portal will auto-save your application, but it is always a good idea to save it periodically as you work on your draft. We recommend drafting your responses to the narrative questions in *Word* or other word processing software, and then copying and pasting your responses into your on-line application. This may help to avoid the loss of unsaved written work if your internet connection goes down unexpectedly, or if you have other technical issues while working on your application.

27.Q: What financial documents does MeHAF require applicants to submit at the LOI and full proposal stages?

A: Our previous standard of practice for grant applications was to request a series of financial documents for review. At times, this proved burdensome for applicants to collect and submit. In considering this practice and our stewardship responsibility, we have moved to a more trust-based approach focused on developing a holistic understanding of an organization's strengths and challenges. At the LOI stage, you will be required to submit a Preliminary Budget Narrative i.e., a few sentences describing how you plan to use the funds being requested from MeHAF. No MeHAF budget form is necessary for the LOI stage of the application. In the full proposal stage, you will be asked to answer a set of questions to help MeHAF best understand your organization's financial position. The questions will not be scored and funding decisions will not be affected by your responses. Please see page 7 of the RFP for more details.

28.Q: Can you provide more detail on what you mean by “public awareness campaigns”?

A: In the broadest sense, we do not fund “ad buys” (e.g., newspaper ads, television ads) and we do not support disease-focused campaigns (e.g., breast cancer awareness, health screening campaigns, etc.). However, some outreach or promotion type activities may be a component of your project (e.g., promotion on social media platforms, printing flyers/brochures). We encourage you to reach out to MeHAF staff to discuss your project concept and how this element may fit, in order to determine whether it is eligible for funding.