



2024 COMMUNITY RESPONSIVE GRANTS (CRG) PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Updated: 5.21.24

PROGRAM PURPOSE

1. I'm not sure if my project is a better fit for this program or the Systems Improvement & Innovation Responsive Grants (SIIRG) program. How can I find out if I should apply for the CRG program?

First, read through the Request for Proposals (RFP) and this list of FAQs carefully. Consider the program criteria and rating information. Also make sure to check out the [Choosing the Best Responsive Grants Program for Your Organization](#) tool. If you are still unsure, contact Senior Program Officer [Frank Martinez Nocito](#) to talk about whether a project you are considering may be the right fit.

2. You describe CRG as a companion program to the SIIRG program. What are the main differences in purpose between the two programs?

We developed the CRG program to fund *community-led* projects that align with the foundation's four broad goal areas. 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.

3. Do proposals need to align with one of the Foundation's strategies, or just the broader goals?

Proposals must align with one or more of [MeHAF's four goal areas](#). They are not required to address a specific MeHAF *strategy*.

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

The CRG program is now in its fifth annual grant cycle. You can find the project profiles of current and past grantees in the [CRG program here](#). Because projects proposed in each grant round vary, grantees' projects in 2024 could and may well look very different.

ORGANIZATIONAL ELIGIBILITY

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

Yes. If your organization would like to apply but you do not have tax-exempt status, you will need to identify an eligible non-profit entity that is aligned with your mission and is willing to support your organization's goals by acting as a fiscal sponsor. Please note, the fiscal sponsor will be the organization that submits the Letter of Inquiry (LOI) and, if selected, the full proposal for this grant application.

A fiscal sponsor is an organization that has 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status that has a similar mission to yours. As your sponsor, that organization must agree, in writing, to seek and manage grants under its exempt status to support your organization's work. If you are working with a fiscal sponsor, that relationship needs to be in

place before submitting an application. A *Memorandum of Understanding* that details the fiscal sponsorship relationship will need to be attached/uploaded to the application. The fiscal sponsor will be the grantee. This means they will receive the grant check, will distribute grant funds on your behalf, and will retain all legal and fiduciary responsibility for ensuring grant funds are properly spent and other grant requirements are met.

6. Are churches or religious organizations eligible to apply to this grant program?

If a church has met the requirements of [IRS Section 501\(c\)\(3\)](#), they are eligible to apply for MeHAF funding. Religious organizations with an income that exceeds \$5,000 annually must have IRS-recognized tax-exempt status to be eligible.

MeHAF funding cannot be used to support projects that espouse any particular religious belief, require membership in any denomination, proselytize, or otherwise place religious conditions or constraints on participants/individuals to be served.

CRG PROGRAM INFORMATION

7. How many LOI applicants do you anticipate will be invited to submit full proposals?

The CRG program is typically very competitive. Each round, we receive many more proposals than we are able to fund. We generally invite full proposals from about twice as many applicants as the number of grants we expect to award.

8. This proposed project must focus on health equity. Is a focus on health equity the same as a focus on the social determinants of health?

No. There are important distinctions between these two related concepts. The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. They include factors like socioeconomic status, education, neighborhood and physical environment, employment, and social support networks, as well as access to health care.

We will achieve health equity when all people have what they need to lead healthy, productive, and purposeful lives. This includes, but is not limited to, access to quality, affordable health care and, often, many of the social determinants of health.

To achieve health equity, we need to examine barriers people face across services, systems, and sectors and address the impact of cumulative disadvantages to achieve fair and just health outcomes for all. Health inequities, as distinct from health disparities, are differences in health outcomes that are unnecessary and avoidable as well as unfair and unjust.¹

9. Are there any specific expectations about the geographic scope of the project – statewide, regional, citywide? What if a project serves a finite population? Is the project still eligible to apply for the maximum amount of annual funding?

You may request the maximum amount of grant funding regardless of the number of individuals or size of the population that you serve. We strive to invite full proposals from a range of geographic areas, ones that serve different types of groups and populations, and ones that are aligned with a mix of the four goal areas.

¹ Wyatt R, Laderman M, Botwinick L, Mate K, Whittington J. 2016. *Achieving Health Equity: A Guide for Health Care Organizations*. IHI White Paper. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Institute for Healthcare Improvement (Available at ihi.org).

10. Would you provide an explanation of the difference between a planning grant and an implementation grant?

We try to address this question through the table below, from the RFP. If you are still unsure after reviewing it, you may want to contact Senior Program Officer [Frank Martinez Nocito](#) to talk about your project and which grant type would be the better fit.

<i>Planning versus Implementation Grants</i>	
Planning Grant	Implementation Grant
<i>Stage of Development:</i> Your work to address an issue or needs may be just beginning. It requires a deeper exploration to fully understand the issue/needs and more information to flesh out what you will do to respond in greater detail.	<i>Stage of Development:</i> Groundwork for your project is well underway and is based on input from members of the community(ties) of focus and system/organizational contacts. You have an adequate understanding of the issues your project will work to resolve, and have a good idea of how the project can address it.
<i>Relationships:</i> A significant part of your work will be establishing and/or developing connections with other people or organizations that could help you to accomplish the system change work you want to do.	<i>Relationships:</i> There are communications and relationships with or within the community(ties) of focus and the organization or system. Community members and cooperating organizations are willing to be actively involved with the proposed project.
<i>Readiness:</i> You need to gather more information and feedback from the community(ties) of focus or others that will be important to informing how you will move forward.	<i>Readiness:</i> You have a clear and specific plan of action and the commitment and trust among members of the community(ties) of focus and cooperating organizations to move forward.
<i>Expected Results:</i> You expect to build relationships and knowledge about an issue or problem and explore ideas and support for potential strategies for taking future action. For example, an action plan, a report or paper that shares what you have learned and makes recommendations, a community advisory group, a partnership agreement and/or roadmap for moving forward, etc.	<i>Expected Results:</i> You have a clear idea of the specific changes that will benefit the community(ties) of focus as a result from your work, if it's successful. For example: Quantitative or qualitative data that illustrates the impact of changes made to policies, practices and/or perceptions made in existing systems or organizations that the community of focus identified as problematic, etc.

11. If we are invited to submit a full proposal, can we make changes to the fundamental nature of the project we are proposing, our community(ies) of focus, or other core elements of what we submitted at the LOI stage?

We invite applicants to submit full proposals based on the project described in the LOI. Significant changes to the fundamental nature of the project may mean it would not have been selected as a good fit for this program. If something significant has changed for your organization or community since submitting your LOI that requires fundamental changes in the work you are proposing to do under this program, you should contact [Frank Martinez Nocito](#), to discuss the circumstances before moving ahead with your application.

12. During the full proposal stage of the grant process, can I change my application from a planning to implementation grant request, or vice versa?

No. Neither MeHAF nor applicants can change a project from planning to implementation or vice versa. If feedback on your LOI includes comments about needing more information to justify the type of grant you are seeking, we advise you to schedule a one-on-one workshop session with the Program Officer to work on clarifying your project.

13. Can you elaborate on MeHAF goal #4 as it relates to the CRG program?

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 help to build and strengthen leadership within communities. Work we fund through grants under this goal area generally includes community leadership development initiatives that promote access to care and equitable outcomes.

14. What are accessibility expense funds, and at what point in the process can I request them?

Accessibility expense funds are additional resources provided to reimburse for eligible accessibility-related expenses with the goal of bringing equity to projects by supporting the participation of all key community members in the planning, implementation, and evaluation activities of a project, regardless of their language or physical ability, geography or economic circumstances. You may request accessibility expense funds when submitting your full proposal application. Please see the [Accessibility Expense Policy](#) and CRG RFP for more details.

BUDGET

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

No. The CRG program provides project-specific funding and will not make grants for general operating support. Other things we do not fund through any of our programs 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 work outside of Maine.

16. Does the LOI budget description and full proposal budget (if invited) and budget narrative need to reflect the same information? Will a change between the LOI and full proposal stages result in a "ding" (a negative) against you?

At the LOI stage, we ask for only a brief budget description to get an understanding of the types of expenses you will use grant funds to support. We ask for this information to ensure the types of expenses you are planning are eligible for MeHAF grant funding. If the ways you intend to use grant funds change significantly between the LOI and full proposal, it may prompt us to ask you clarifying questions and/or seek more information from you.

17. If you are asking for the maximum grant award in an implementation grant, but your needs are expected to be different in years one and two, how do you reflect your needs in the budget description?

The brief budget description in the LOI should be your best estimate of what you expect your funding needs will be. The maximum grant amount is \$50,000 dollars *each* year, with a two-year maximum of \$100,000. Proposing \$40,000 in year one does not mean you can request \$60,000 for year two. Each year's request is capped at \$50,000.

18. Can I include indirect costs as part of the total grant amount I am requesting?

Yes, [indirect costs](#) can be up to 20% of the total grant amount requested. Indirect costs are those an organization incurs in carrying out its work that cannot be readily identified with a particular activity. Indirect costs include general overhead costs, such as bank, payroll processing and audit fees; liability insurance; office equipment purchases or maintenance not directly related to the project; and salaries and benefits of executive or administrative personnel who are not directly engaged in the project. For example, for a total grant of \$50,000 up to \$10,000 of the budget may be for indirect costs ($\$50,000 \times .20$). The total grant request, including both direct and indirect costs, may not exceed the maximum grant amounts for this program (i.e., \$30,000 for planning grants and \$50,000 per year for implementation grants).

19. What financial documents do we need to submit as part of our full proposal application?

Other than the brief budget description at the LOI stage and the new budget request-budget report form at the full application stage, no other financial documents are needed.

20. Will my answers to the financial capacity questions in the grant application affect my chances of getting a grant?

No. The two questions in the full proposal application are not scored, and will not affect funding decisions.

21. Can you define direct care costs?

“Direct care costs” refers to paying for health care services provided to an individual or group. The reason we will not pay for these kinds of costs through our grants is two-fold. First, MeHAF’s by-laws prohibit us from supplanting (i.e., taking the place of) other sources of funding/payment (government, insurance, etc.). Second, the goal of our grants is to help grantees change systems, care, and services to make them more efficient, coordinated, and cost-effective. This approach benefits communities for the long term, rather than supporting service delivery for a limited time to a limited group of people, with no means of continuing those services once the grant funds are spent.

[MEHAF ONLINE GRANTS PORTAL – GENERAL INFORMATION](#)

22. I’m having technical difficulties with the application. What should I do?

For help with technical difficulties, please contact [Holly Irish, Grants Manager](#), as soon as possible.

23. If my organization has an account in the grants portal, but the contact person is not the lead on this project, should the project lead have their own account? Can we share login information? What if more than one person is putting together the proposal?

Each organization may have one account in the grants portal. Multiple people from a single organization may request log-in credentials from Holly Irish at MeHAF, but the grants portal allows only a single point of contact (i.e., the grant contact). Only the *grant contact* has the ability to submit or receive documents within the portal. The grant contact may share their login information with others that have a role in writing the application. Within the CRG application there are also fields that ask for an *additional contact*. If your organization receives a grant, this person will be added as a secondary contact to a CRG email group of grantee contacts the Program Officer maintains. These additional contacts will not receive notifications about the grant that come from the grants portal, such as grant agreements, reporting reminders, etc. For help managing your organization’s account, changing contact information, or for log in credentials, please contact Holly Irish.

24. Does the MeHAF grants portal auto-save my draft application?

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. When writing your responses, we recommend first drafting them in Word or other word processing software, and then copying and pasting your responses into your online application. This may help to avoid losing any unsaved written work if you have technical issues or your internet connection goes down unexpectedly while working on your application. Note: Copy and paste text only. Bullets or other symbols, charts, etc. cannot be pasted properly into the text boxes of the online application.

25. Once submitted, can the application be reopened and modified?

Once submitted, you will no longer be able to change the application. However, you will be able to view and print your submission.

LOI SUBMISSION & FOLLOW-UP

26. How do I submit my LOI application?

Log in to the grants portal to review funding opportunities and apply. If you have any doubts about whether your organization already has an account, please contact Holly Irish prior to creating a new account to avoid creating a duplicate record. Holly is also available to help if you do not know your log in credentials.

27. May we submit more than one LOI?

An organization may submit a single LOI. For government entities, universities, and large health care systems, a department or division may be considered a separate organization. If you believe this may apply to your organization, please contact Holly Irish before starting your LOI.

28. Are there character limits per question or an overall limit?

Each question has its own character limit. They are listed in the RFP and the online application.

29. When I submit the LOI, will I receive a confirmation?

If you are the designated grant contact person, you will receive a confirmation. Please be sure to confirm that you have marked our grants portal's sending email address (administrator@grantinterface.com) as a "safe sender" so you receive all grant-related communications from our system.

30. If our LOI doesn't result in an invitation to submit a full proposal, will we get feedback on our application? Will we learn who received invitations or awards?

Yes, MeHAF staff are happy to provide feedback following each stage of the grant process. The denial email will let you know how to schedule a debriefing call if you wish.

All applicants from both the LOI and full proposal stages will be notified via email when the full list of awarded grantees for the 2024 CRG Program is posted on our website in early December.

FUNDING DECISIONS AND NOTIFICATION

31. When can we expect to hear whether we have been awarded a grant?

We will notify all applicants about the status of your application via email on **Wednesday, November 6**. We send notifications to those who are selected as well as those who are not. If you do not receive an email from us by that date, please do not hesitate to contact us. We have had occasional issues with email delivery from our grants portal to some addresses, including those that have received portal email successfully in the past. We are happy to hear from you if there is a problem – please do not assume we have denied your proposal if you do not see a message in your inbox.