![MeHAF — Maine Health Access Foundation]

2024 COMMUNITY RESPONSIVE GRANTS PROGRAM

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) – GUIDELINES

Important Dates & Deadlines:

- **RFP posted:** Monday, June 10

- **LOI guidance video & Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) posted:** Tuesday, June 11

- **LOI virtual open office hours:**
  - Tuesday, June 18 10:00 am – Noon and 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm (Zoom link to be posted on CRG webpage during the session)
  - Wednesday, June 19 10:00 am – Noon and 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm (Zoom link to be posted on CRG webpage during the session)

- **Letter of Inquiry (LOI) due:** Thursday, July 11 at 4:00 pm

- **LOI review decisions & invitations for full proposal communicated:** Tuesday, August 6

- **Full proposal guidance video for invited applicants & FAQ posted:** Wednesday, August 7

- **Full proposal individual workshop sessions (Scheduled upon request – not required):** Monday, August 12 thru Wednesday, August 28

- **Full proposal for invited applicants due:** Wednesday, September 4 at 4:00 pm

- **Applicants notified of award status:** Wednesday, November 6

- **Grant period:** December 1, 2024 – November 30, 2025 or 2026

Please Note:

LOIs and full proposals must be submitted using an online application on the MeHAF grants portal by 4:00 pm on the due date (**Thursday, July 11** for the LOI; **Wednesday, September 4** for the full proposal). If you have any problems with the online application, need access to a computer, or need help with your submission, please contact Holly Irish as soon as possible, preferably 48 hours or more before the due date. For questions about organizational eligibility, fiscal sponsorship, and multiple applications coming from distinct units of a large organization please email Holly Irish before beginning an application.

Funding Available:

- Individual grants: one-year planning grants up to **$30,000**, or one- or two-year implementation grants up to **$50,000** per year.
- Expected total **2024** funding for new grants: approximately **$360,000.**

Key Staff Contacts:

- **For program questions:**
  Email Frank Martinez Nocito, Senior Program Officer, (207) 620-8266, ext. 116.
- **For technical questions about the online application or the MeHAF grants portal:**
  Email Holly Irish, Grants Manager, (207) 620-8266, ext. 115.

We see ourselves not as only a funder, but also part of the health and nonprofit communities in Maine. We value our relationships with organizations and strive to build relationships with applicants whether they are awarded funds or not. We encourage you to reach out with any questions you may have throughout the process and use us as a resource. If you have questions at any point in the grant process, please do not hesitate to contact the staff lead, Senior Program Officer Frank Martinez Nocito or another member of the MeHAF staff.

HELPFUL TERMS TO KNOW

The following terms appear in this RFP. These definitions explain how MeHAF uses them for purposes of this program.

1. **Community(ies) of focus** is the specific population most affected by barriers to health and health care access who are at the center of the proposed work, and whose health would directly benefit from the project's success. This may be a group with a shared identity, a common cause, common geographic location, similar health and health access needs, or other shared experiences or characteristics.
2. **Health equity** means that 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. Pursuing health equity is about addressing the disparities created by those in power, which have systemically advantaged some groups and disadvantaged others, both historically and currently. Achieving health equity requires a commitment to examine and address barriers across services, systems, and sectors and begin to compensate for the impact of cumulative disadvantages to achieve fair and just health outcomes for all.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

The Community Responsive Grants (CRG) program grew out of the recognition that those closest to a problem often have the best ideas about potential solutions. The purpose of this program is to respond to community needs with community-led solutions; to address emerging opportunities, test innovative approaches or new ideas; or implement programs informed by the experiences of communities on how best to address barriers to achieving health equity.

Projects most likely to be funded improve health equity by focusing on changing policies, practices, and perceptions that create barriers to health care and good health and align with one or more of MeHAF's Four Goal Areas: equitable access, systems change, better health for specific groups, and shared leadership.

Applicants may apply for either a one-year *planning grant* of **up to $30,000** or an *implementation grant* for one or two years of **up to $50,000 per year**. The table below may help you decide whether your project is a better fit as a planning or an implementation proposal.

Planning versus Implementation Grants

Planning Grant	Implementation Grant
Stage of Development: 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.	***Stage of Development:*** Groundwork for your project is well underway, based on input from 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 them.
Relationships: 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.	***Relationships:*** You have 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.
Readiness: 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.	***Readiness:*** 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.
Expected Results: You expect to build relationships and knowledge about an issue or problem and explore ideas and support for potential strategies for future action. Examples of final products may include: an action plan, a report sharing your learning and recommendations, a community advisory group, a partnership agreement and/or a roadmap for moving forward, etc.	***Expected Results:*** You have a clear idea of the specific changes that will benefit the community(ties) of focus as a result of your work, if it's successful. Result examples include: Quantitative or qualitative data that illustrates the impact of changes made to policies, practices and/or perceptions in existing systems or organizations that the community of focus identified as problematic, etc.

ELIGIBILITY TO APPLY

Applicants must be a **501(c)(3) nonprofit organization; a local, state, or tribal government entity; or an educational institution and must be based in Maine.** If your organization is not eligible to apply independently, you may be able to apply through a fiscal sponsor. In that case, please contact Holly Irish <u>before</u> beginning an application so that we can assist you with the steps. Individuals and private foundations are not eligible.

Eligible organizations may submit only one application for the 2024 CRG program, **either** a planning **or** implementation proposal. Current MeHAF **grantees in other programs *are* eligible** to apply. Separate administrative units of large organizations (e.g., different hospitals within a larger health system) may be eligible to submit individual proposals. If you believe your organization meets this definition, and for all questions about eligibility, please email Holly Irish <u>before</u> beginning an application to confirm.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS & HOW TO APPLY

Step 1: Letter of Inquiry

The Letter of Inquiry (LOI) is not an actual "letter", but the first part of the application process. It must be submitted through the MeHAF grants portal. LOIs are due **July 11, three weeks after the RFP release date.**

The online LOI application includes the following required sections:

- Organization's tax status
- Fiscal sponsorship; are you applying on behalf of another organization as a fiscal sponsor? If yes, you must submit a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining the relationship.
- Organization's mission and/or vision statement (up to 500 characters)
- Organization's leadership demographics (At the full proposal stage, applicants will also submit a board or tribal council list.)
- Project title; this may be a working title and can be modified later.
- Alignment with MeHAF's four Goal Areas (All projects must **clearly and explicitly align** with at least one of four goal areas: equitable access, systems change, better health for specific groups, and shared leadership. Applicants may check all that apply.)
- Brief project description (up to 500 characters); Complete these two sentences:
  - "The grant will support…"
  - "By the end of the grant period this project will…"
- Grant request type (*planning* or *implementation*)
- Request amount(s); if applying for a 2-year grant, include the requested amount for each year and the total amount, in the spaces provided.
- Project start and end dates (All projects start on 12/1/2024 and end on either 11/30/2025 or 11/30/2026.)
- Describe the community(ties) of focus (The people most affected by barriers to health and care access that your project is designed to benefit.)
- Additional contact's name, title, email, and phone number (*optional).* You may identify a secondary contact person for the project in addition to the person listed as the applicant.
- Geographic area served by the project
- Race and ethnicity of population served by the project
- Project summary
- Preliminary budget description, as described below (you will submit a more detailed budget if invited to the full proposal stage)
- Verify compliance with MeHAF's Nondiscrimination Policy

PROGRAM CRITERIA & APPLICATION RATING

Successful CRG applications will meet the following five criteria:

1) Aligns with one or more of MeHAF's Four Goal Areas.
2) Improves health equity by addressing policies, practices and/or perceptions that create disproportionate barriers to health and access to health care for some groups of people relative to others.
3) Responds to a community-defined need or opportunity with a community-defined solution.
4) Includes leadership and decision-making by the community of focus and meaningfully engages the community throughout the project.
5) Defines what success will look like for the project and demonstrates that both the applicant and the community of focus have participated in defining success.

Rating

Reviewers for both LOIs and full proposals will evaluate the project's alignment with each of the five CRG program criteria (above), using this rating scale (1–4):

- **1 –** Does not align with the criteria.
- **2 –** Minimally aligns with the criteria.
- **3 –** Somewhat aligns with the criteria.
- **4 –** Strongly aligns with the criteria.

A. LOI Narrative

Write a short summary of the most important aspects of your project. Be sure to describe how it aligns with each of the five CRG program criteria (above). Your response can be up to **4,000-characters** long (including spaces). Keep in mind that this is a maximum. You are not required to use the full character limit. If invited to submit a full proposal, you will share more details.

> **Instruction:** In the text box provided in the online application, please **briefly describe** your proposed project, demonstrating how it aligns with each of the five program criteria on page four of the RFP.

B. Preliminary Budget Description

In a few sentences, please describe how you expect to use the grant funds, including your plans to compensate key partner organizations and/or community members you plan to involve.

Step 2: Full Proposal (For invited applicants only, after LOI review) MeHAF will copy your LOI responses into the full proposal application form in the grants portal. Full applications are due **September 4, four weeks after the date of invitation**.

A. Full Proposal Narrative Questions

At this stage, you may modify your LOI response and will answer three additional questions. We offer prompts to guide you in addressing each of the five CRG program criteria.

Please be sure to review the program criteria (on page four of the RFP) and read each question and prompt before beginning your responses.

Your response to each question can be up to **3,000-characters** long (including spaces). Keep in mind that this is a maximum. You are not required to use the full character limit.

> **Question 1:** Describe the need or opportunity you will address, the actions you will take in response to that need, and how this work will improve health equity for the community(ies) of focus by addressing policies, practices and/or perceptions that create disproportionate barriers to health.
>
> **Question 2:** Describe how you have engaged the community(ies) of focus in deciding the issue you will address is a priority and determining the actions you will take, and how they will be involved in defining and measuring success.
>   a. What leadership and decision-making power does the community(ies) of focus have in the proposed work?
>   b. What role(s) have they played and will they play in the planning process/project?
>
> **Question 3:** What changes or outcomes do you expect to see by the end of your project?
>   a. How will you know whether you have achieved your expected goals?
>   b. What will be different for the community(ties) of focus if the project is successful?

The full proposal must also include the following:

B. Full Proposal Budget Form

Please review MeHAF's <u>Budget Form Guidance</u> and complete the <u>new</u> MeHAF Grant Project Budget Request & Budget Report Form, using the template that you can download within the application. Explain how your organization will use this grant and any other funds supporting this work to carry out the proposed activities. We encourage you to read all of <u>MeHAF's funding policies and guidance</u> before completing the budget form.

For those who have applied for other MeHAF grants in the past, please note this change and be sure to use the current form. The new form combines the budget, budget narrative, and annual financial reporting all into one document. The budget details the income and expenses for the proposed work. If the application is for a two-year grant, you will submit a detailed budget for the <u>first year only</u>. If funded, you will submit a second-year budget near the end of your first grant year.

Funds requested must be proportionate with the work to be completed, and the work proposed must be proportionate with the funds available. Reviewers will consider:

- how the proposed budget aligns with the scope of the work described, and
- the degree to which you demonstrate plans to share grant resources with partner organizations and/or community members, to acknowledge the value of their roles and contributions to the work.

Include the following details about how the funds will be used:

1) Amount for applicant organization;
2) Amounts for partner organizations and/or participating community members; and
3) Amount of matching or in-kind support from the applicant, partner organizations or other funding sources.

Reflect all of these that are applicable to your project in the designated columns of the MeHAF budget form and then describe them in column C, "Details/Explanation."

Information about matching and in-kind support helps reviewers understand the resources available for the full scope of a project if this grant would be part of a larger whole. Please note that matching funds are not required.

- Indirect Costs: We encourage you to review our [Indirect Cost Policy](#) and to budget indirect costs of up to 20% of the requested grant amount. Please note that both direct and indirect costs must be included in the total amount requested, and taken together, may not exceed the maximum amounts noted above by grant type.

- Accessibility Expenses: MeHAF can provide additional funds to a CRG grantee to reimburse for eligible accessibility-related expenses. The goals of the policy are to support language justice and to reduce disproportionate barriers community members and leaders face that limit their ability to lead or inform a project. Please review our [Accessibility Expense Policy](#) and if you have questions, please contact Frank Martinez Nocito to discuss.

Attach the **completed budget form** by following the instructions in the application: click on "Upload a file", select the appropriate document from your computer, and then click on "Open".

C. Financial Capacity

In the final section of the application, we ask you to answer two questions to help us understand your organization's financial position. These questions are not scored and will not affect funding decisions.

1. Do you have any current or anticipated issues that may impact your organization's financial health and capacity to carry out the work being proposed? These might include things like expected leadership or other key staff changes, anticipated loss of revenue, concerns identified by your auditors or other professional advisors regarding financial controls, concerns regarding potential loss of charitable status with the IRS. (yes/no)

   - If yes, please briefly describe.

2. Does your organization have needs for technical assistance regarding issues of financial capacity, sustainability, and/or controls that, if appropriate, MeHAF may be able to support? Depending on the specific needs and circumstances, MeHAF may have expertise or capacity to provide referrals to resources or varying types of technical assistance that may be helpful. (yes/no)

   - If yes, please briefly describe.

D. Attachments

If not already submitted in the last 12 months and not listed on your website, attach a current Board list/Tribal Council list by following the instructions in the application: click on "Upload a file", select the appropriate document from your computer, and click on "Open".

REVIEW PROCESS AND AWARDS

MeHAF is committed to a thorough and fair review of all applications, and follows a policy to avoid conflicts of interest for all staff, reviewers, and committee members involved in funding decisions. At each stage of the application process, in addition to the program criteria outlined in this RFP, reviewers consider factors including the population(s), geographic regions served and strategic priority areas to ensure diversity across the group of recommended proposals, taken as a whole. Reviewers also

prioritize applications that demonstrate a commitment to sharing grant resources with key partners and community members that will be engaged in the work, commensurate with the roles they will play.

During the review process, MeHAF staff may contact applicants with clarifying questions and ask for responses, either verbally or in writing.

Letter of Inquiry: MeHAF staff review and discuss LOIs and invite those applications that best align with the program criteria to submit full proposals. We will notify you of these decisions on Tuesday, **August 6**.

Full Proposal: Community members with relevant knowledge and experience, as well as MeHAF staff, review full proposals using the program criteria. The review team then meets to discuss the applications and decide on a recommended slate of grants. The review team considers reviewer ratings as well as the overall makeup of the proposed grantee cohort, as described above.

MeHAF's Program & Grants Committee reviews the process and the review team recommendations and approves a final slate of grants.

- All invited full proposal applicants, regardless of funding decision, will be notified by email about the status of their applications by Wednesday, **November 6**. If you do not receive a notification email, please contact Holly Irish.

    - We will send funded applicants an award letter and grant agreement by email. The grantee must electronically sign the grant agreement before payment can be issued.
    - Applicants not funded, are encouraged to schedule a debriefing call with MeHAF staff for feedback on your application and to ask questions.
    - MeHAF staff will notify all LOI and full proposal applicants via email when the list of 2024 CRG grants awarded is posted on MeHAF's website in early December.

GRANTEE REPORTING, LEARNING AND EVALUATION EXPECTATIONS

Reporting expectations – grantees will:

- Schedule an interim check-in with the Program Officer at the mid-point of each year of funding; and
- Submit annual/final narrative and financial reports at the conclusion of each year of the grant period. Grantees have the option to have a conversation about their work and their learning with the Program Officer in place of a written narrative report.

MeHAF may also include a structured interview with grantees at the end of the project with program evaluators and/or MeHAF staff.

Grantees are not required to participate in a learning community but may be offered optional opportunities for peer learning or technical support. MeHAF will work collaboratively with grantees to identify relevant ways to support peer learning. When feasible and appropriate, MeHAF also hopes that grantees will connect with other organizations and communities doing similar or related work to learn from each other. MeHAF staff will support making relevant connections whenever possible.

External evaluation consultants work in cooperation with grantees and the foundation to evaluate this program. The co-designed evaluation plan includes technical assistance intended to strengthen grantee organizations' ability to apply evaluative strategies to their own projects and a qualitative assessment of the degree to which the grant funding supports accomplishments. This includes identifying barriers and

facilitators to the work, the degree to which projects were framed and carried out with an equity perspective, the nature of community involvement, and actual or potential systems changes.

FURTHER PROGRAM INFORMATION AND APPLICATION SUPPORT

We strongly encourage applicants to explore MeHAF's [CRG webpage](#). Please log into the MeHAF grants portal well ahead of the application deadlines to be sure you can access and use the online application and address any technical issues that could interfere with a timely submission. Applicants can find a recorded tour of MeHAF's online grants portal on the CRG webpage.

In the past, we have provided live information sessions for applicants. We are now piloting a new approach. At the beginning of both the LOI and full proposal stages, a series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and a program Guidance Video will be posted for applicant information.

We encourage you to review these materials. We are also offering optional drop-in Office Hours via Zoom with the program lead, Frank Martinez Nocito, to address questions during the following times:

- June 18, 10:00 am – Noon
- June 18, 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm
- June 19, 10:00 am – Noon
- June 19, 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

To access one of these Office Hours, visit the CRG webpage for the Zoom link that will be posted during those times. There is no need to schedule in advance, just drop in if you have questions.

Based on questions raised during Office Hours, the FAQ may also be updated and reposted to the CRG webpage. Applicants will be notified if/when we make updates.

If you are invited to submit a full proposal, Frank Martinez Nocito will offer consultations of up to one hour with individual applicants between **August 12 – 28** for input and advice on your application. While we encourage applicants to take advantage of this opportunity, it is **not required** and will not influence reviewers' consideration of your application.

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