MeHAF
MAINE HEALTH ACCESS FOUNDATION

SYSTEMS IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION RESPONSIVE GRANTS (SIIRG) PROGRAM

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
Updated: 1.2.2025

Program Purpose

1. **What would MeHAF like to accomplish with the SIIRG program?**

   With this program we hope to provide a regular schedule of funding opportunities for organizations working to improve or innovate to make their services more responsive to health needs as defined by the communities they serve We want to provide support for system changes that increase the involvement of the people who receive services.

2. **Can you provide examples of past SIIRG grantee projects to give a sense of what was funded under this program?**

   You can find the project profiles of grantees funded in the four previous rounds of the SIIRG program here. Because of the types of projects proposed in every round, 2025's grantees projects could and may well look different.

3. **I'm not sure if my project is best suited to this opportunity or the Community Responsive Grants (CRG) Program. How can I find out if I should apply for the SIIRG program?**

   First, read through the Request for Proposals (RFP) carefully, including the program criteria and rating information, and this complete list of Frequently Asked Questions. 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 Charles Dwyer for any needed clarification regarding whether a project you are considering may be the right fit.

Organizational Eligibility

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

Organizations intending to apply through a fiscal sponsor, must contact Holly to discuss your situation before beginning an application. Holly will guide you in submitting a fiscally sponsored application that meets all requirements. Please note failure to make contact regarding your grant application and the fiscal sponsorship process could result in a delay of processing your application and interfere with eligibility.

The organization serving as the fiscal sponsor will be required to:
- *submit the letter of inquiry (LOI) and, if selected, the full proposal for this grant application,*
- *legally assume responsibility for the proper expenditure and accounting of all funds received and disbursed for the sponsored organization's activities,*
- *report grant funds received as income for both tax and financial reporting purposes,*
- *if a grant is awarded, sign a grant agreement stipulating all legal terms of the award.*

The organization being sponsored will be required to:
- *ensure a relationship with your fiscal sponsor is in place before considering an application and that your fiscal sponsor is aware of your intent to apply,*
- *adhere to the requirements set forth in your memorandum of understanding or agreement between your organization and your fiscal sponsor,*
- *acknowledge your organization is qualified to carry out the proposed work or project.*

SIIRG Program Information

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

Due to the open and responsive nature of this program, and the various community needs across the state, we anticipate it being a very competitive process and recognize that the demand may outpace the available resources. However many LOIs we receive, we will seek to invite full proposals from approximately twice as many applicants as the number of grants we expect to award.

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

   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.

   Health equity is 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.

   Achieving health equity requires a commitment to examine barriers 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, have been described as those differences in health outcomes that are unnecessary and avoidable as well as unfair and unjust.[1]

7. **Would you explain what you mean by "systemic barriers"?**

   Obstacles such as policies, costs, distance, language, stigma, and bias that prevent fair access to care/services or create an unjust disparity in health.

8. **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 ($50,000?)**

   You may request the maximum amount of grant funding regardless of the number of individuals or size of the population that you serve. We will seek full proposals from a range of geographic areas which serve different groups and populations and address one (or more) of the four strategic areas.

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

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

Planning versus Implementation Grants

Planning Grant	Implementation Grant
Stage of Development: Your work to address 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 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.
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:*** 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.
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 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.	***Expected Results:*** 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.

10. **Can I make one application for a year of planning and a year of implementation?**

No. You must apply for either a planning grant or an implementation grant.

11. **The focus of this program is on improving or innovating services. This implies services already exist. Is this an opportunity to develop new services that address one or more of the four strategy areas?**

If the community has identified an access barrier due to a lack of available services, then it is acceptable to propose developing a service to address the access barrier.

12. **Do you anticipate that grantees will spend some time up-front on planning, even if we apply for an implementation grant? What are the expectations around "hitting the ground running" for the implementation grants?**

We understand that implementation grant projects will need some time to prepare, however planning should be completed prior to the beginning of the implementation grant period. While there is no hard and fast expectation, a general guideline would be that projects would be ready to implement within the first 90 days of the award.

13. **About involving folks that are most impacted; if the community of focus is being served by direct service workers or other service providers, could those individuals be the ones that are informing the project since they have a direct sense of what the needs are of this population?**

Direct service workers and other service providers have an important perspective and may be among the groups that help to inform proposed work. However, having their input is not a substitute for involving the people most impacted by the issue of focus and/or the services you may wish to improve. Achieving the highest range of points, except in rare instances, will require the active involvement of people most impacted by the issue in the design of the planning or implementation project.

14. **Can part of the work be developing mechanisms for collecting community input/creation of an advisory board or should that already be in place?**

A planning project may include or even be entirely about these kinds of activities, though established relationship with the communities you wish to engage for input/creation of an advisory board will make for a more competitive application. Competitive implementation proposals will have these elements already in place.

15. **We have a collaborative program that we would like to undertake with a fellow nonprofit organization and/or community members. Is that eligible?**

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.

16. **Can we partner with a for-profit organization or service, if needed?**

Yes, for-profit (or other non-profit entities) could receive funds through a Memorandum of Understanding or some other contractual arrangement with the grant recipient. MeHAF funds may not be re-granted to another entity or individual.

17. **It is noted in the budget guidance that SIIRG program funds won't cover direct care costs. What is MeHAF's definition of direct care costs?**

    Essentially, direct care costs are anything that involves paying for the provision of health care services for an individual or group. The rationale for this is two-fold. First, MeHAF's funds are not intended to supplant 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.

18. **Might there be additional funding in subsequent years? If we apply for a planning grant, could we apply for an implementation grant in the next year?**

    Only planning grantees that have made significant progress during the first six months of their planning should consider applying for an implementation grant in the very next round of grant-making. Due to the lead time required necessary to process applications, competitive funding for implementation opens about half-way through the 12-month planning grant period. If implementation plans have not yet been significantly developed by the time applications are due, planning grantees should apply for implementation during the next SIIRG grant cycle.

19. **If we receive an implementation grant, could we apply for an additional one or two years of funding in future application cycles?**

    No. However, if you received an implementation grant, the program officer will monitor your progress and gather information about the real and potential impact of your project. Weighing that information, MeHAF anticipates that each year one or two SIIRG grantees will be approached to develop a continuation proposal.

Budget

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

    No. The SIIRG program provides project-specific funding and will not make grants for general operating support. 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, or for projects that do not benefit people living in Maine.

21. **Implementation grants require matching funds, what is the required amount?**

    The matching requirements will vary based on the size of the applicant organization's budget. Matching funds are only expected from applicants seeking an implementation grant. Those applying for a planning grant are not required to contribute matching funds. See the budget guidance documents linked in the SIIRG RFP for more details.

22. **Does the LOI budget narrative and full proposal budget (if invited) need to reflect the same information? Or will a change result in a "ding" (a negative) against you?**

    At the LOI stage only a preliminary budget narrative is required. 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 should not change from the LOI to the Full Proposal stages. However, the details may shift. Part of the reason we are requesting budgetary information at this phase of the process is to ensure that the types of expenses align with MeHAF budget guidance (e.g., capital expenses are not supported).

23. **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 Narrative?**

    The preliminary budget narrative requested in the LOI is your own best estimate of what you anticipate your funding needs will be. The maximum amount of your request in any single year is $50,000 dollars. For example: Proposing $40K in year one would not mean a $60K request would be allowable for year two of the project. Each year's request is capped at $50K.

MeHAF Online Grants Portal General Information

24. **I'm having technical difficulties with the application. What should I do?**

    If you encounter any technical difficulties, please contact Holly Irish as soon as possible.

25. **Can more than one person have a log in for an organization?**

    Yes, user log ins are tied to an organization and there can be more than one user per organization. Many organizations are already in our system and yours may be. If you would like to be added as another user to your organization, please contact Holly Irish.

26. **Can more than one user work on a proposal in our grants system?**

    Each application is tied to one specific user email. However, our grants management system is currently piloting an internal "collaboration" feature. Users have the option to invite others to view and edit their applications with this feature if they wish.

27. 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 it in Word or other word processing software, and then copying and pasting your response into your on-line application. This may help to avoid the loss of unsaved written work if your internet connection goes down unexpectedly or you have other technical issues 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.

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

Once submitted you will no longer be able to modify the application. You will be able to view and print your submission.

LOI Submission and Follow Up

29. How do I submit my LOI/application?

Log in to the Grants Portal to review funding opportunities and apply. Please contact Holly Irish prior to creating a new account to avoid creating a duplicate record. Holly is also available to assist if you do not know your log in credentials.

30. May we submit more than one Letter of Interest (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, Grants Manager prior to submitting your LOI.

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

Each question does have a character limit and they will be reflected in the RFP instructions.

32. If we submitted information like our Board list and 990s within the last 12 months, do we need to re-submit them for this application?

No. If the information remains current there is no need to submit it again within a 12-month period.

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

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

34. **If our Letter of Inquiry doesn't result in an invitation for us to submit a full proposal, is there a process to receive feedback? Will we learn who received invitations or awards?**

Yes, MeHAF staff will offer you the option to receive feedback following each stage of application. The denial email will include information about how to arrange a debriefing call if desired.

The grants contact will receive a list of the funded projects once all grantee agreements have been finalized. All applicants from both the LOI and full proposal stages are encouraged to visit MeHAF's website on or after July 1 to see the project profiles of awarded grantees for the 2025 SIIRG Program.