![MeHAF - Maine Health Access Foundation]

2023 COMMUNITY RESPONSIVE GRANTS PROGRAM

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) – GUIDELINES

Important Dates & Deadlines:

- **RFP Posted:** Monday, May 15

- **Informational Session via Zoom:** Thursday, May 18 from 9:00-10:30

  To register, please email Holly Irish. A recording will be available following the session.

- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) posted:** Monday, May 22

- **Letter of Inquiry (LOI) due:** Monday, June 5 at **4:00 pm**

- **LOI Review decisions & invitations for full proposal communicated:** Tuesday, July 18

- **Informational Session for invited applicants:** Monday, July 24 from 9:30-11:00

- **FAQs for full proposal posted:** Friday, August 4

- **Full Proposal (invited applicants) due:** Thursday, August 24 at **4:00 pm**

- **Applicants notified of award status:** Wednesday, November 1

- **Grant Period:** December 1, 2023 – November 30, 2024 or 2025

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 2023 funding for new grants: approximately **$400,000.**

Key Staff Contacts:

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

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** (**Monday, June 5** for the LOI; **Thursday, August 24** for the full proposal). If you are having problems with the online application, need access to a computer, or are in need of help with your submission, please contact Holly Irish as soon as possible, preferably 48 hours or more before the due date.

We see ourselves not as just 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 Program Officer [Frank Martinez Nocito](#) or another member of the [MeHAF staff](#).

HELPFUL TERMS TO KNOW

The following terms appear in this RFP and are defined here to help you understand how MeHAF is using them. When we use them, they will be *italicized*. Please refer back to the definitions as necessary.

1. **Community** as we use it here 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.
2. **Community(ies) of focus** is the specific population that will be at the center of the work you are proposing, and whose health would directly benefit from your project's success. MeHAF expects members of this *community* to be meaningfully involved, with leadership and decision-making power, at each stage of the process from planning/project conception to the end of the grant period. This includes identifying the issue or opportunity, designing potential solutions, and determining how well the project met the identified need(s).
3. **Community engagement** is intentional, genuine, and includes ongoing interactions with and involvement of the *community(ies) of focus* in most or all levels of the proposed planning or project. Some examples include deliberate dialogue, working collaboratively, and co-designed assessment and planning.
4. **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. The goal is to address health 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.
5. **Planning grants** support a collaborative process of exploring and developing ideas with the *community(ies) of focus*, that results in a specific product, such as a plan of action or project concept that could be implemented.
6. **Implementation grants** support the implementation of a project based on a clear and specific action plan that has already been developed with leadership from the *community(ies) of focus,* and that is ready to move forward.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the Community Responsive Grants (CRG) program is to provide funding for *communities* to plan or implement projects that align with one or more of MeHAF's Four Goal Areas: equitable access, systems change, better health for specific groups, and shared leadership. The CRG program is intended 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 to address barriers to achieving *health equity*.

The CRG program aligns with [MeHAF's mission and values](#), and grew out of the recognition that those closest to a given problem often have the best ideas about potential solutions. Projects most likely to be funded will improve *health equity* by focusing on changing policies, practices, and perceptions that create barriers to health care and good health, and will be organized such that the *communities* who face the greatest barriers have a leadership role in creating, implementing and evaluating the solutions that address their needs.

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

Planning versus Implementation Grants

Planning Grant	Implementation Grant
Stage of Development: Your work on the issue or need is just beginning and requires exploration to fully understand it and flesh out what you will do to respond in greater detail.	***Stage of Development:*** A degree of groundwork for your project has already been completed – you understand the problem your project will be trying to solve, based on what you have heard from the *community*, and have a good idea of how you will go about addressing it.
Relationships: A significant part of your work will be establishing relationships with other people or organizations that will help you to accomplish the work you want to do.	***Relationships:*** You have the important relationships already in place that will be essential to the success of the work you are proposing.
Readiness: You are at the stage of needing to gather more information from the *community* or others that will be important to informing how you move forward.	***Readiness:*** You have a clear and specific plan of action that you and your partners are ready to move forward.
Expected Results: The expected outcome of your work may be described as having learned more about an issue, problem or possible strategy that will support future action. For example, what you will have to show for the work you have done may include things like an action plan, a report or paper that shares what you have learned and makes recommendations, a roadmap for moving forward, etc.	***Expected Results:*** You have a clear idea of the specific changes that will make a difference for the *community* your project seeks to serve that will result from your work, if successful. For example, what you will have to show for your work may include things like quantitative or qualitative data that illustrates the impact of a change, changes to policies, practices and/or perceptions that have been made in existing systems that the *community* identified as problematic, etc.

ELIGIBILITY TO APPLY

We fund organizations that are 501(c)(3) nonprofits; local, state, or tribal government entities; or educational institutions. Applicants must be organizations based in Maine. If your organization is not eligible to apply independently, 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. If you have not previously worked with a fiscal sponsor to apply for a MeHAF grant, please contact Holly Irish 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. Individuals and private foundations are not eligible to apply.

Eligible organizations may only have one active CRG at any time and may submit only one application for CRG (either a planning or implementation proposal). Current MeHAF grantees with grants **under other programs are eligible** to apply for a CRG. Separate administrative units of large organizations (e.g., different health centers within a larger FQHC organization) may be eligible to submit individual proposals.

For questions about organizational eligibility, fiscal sponsorship, and applications coming from distinct units of a large organization, please contact Holly Irish **before** beginning your application.

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) Responds to a *community*-defined need or opportunity with a *community*-defined solution.
3) 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.
4) Includes leadership and decision-making by the *community(ies) of focus* and meaningfully engages the *community* throughout the project.
5) Defines what success will look for the project and demonstrates that both the applicant and the *community(ies) of focus* have participated in defining success.

Rating

In both the LOI and full proposal phases, responses to the application questions will be evaluated on how closely they align 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.

HOW TO APPLY & APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Step 1: Letter of Inquiry

The Letter of Inquiry (LOI) is not an actual "letter", but an initial part of the application process which must be submitted through the MeHAF grants portal. The online application includes the following required sections:

- Organization's tax status
- Fiscal sponsorship (if applicable)
- Organization's mission and/or vision statement (up to 500 characters)
- *Community(ies) of focus* (up to 300 characters)
- Alignment with MeHAF's four Goal Areas (must choose one or more)
- Project title
- Brief project description (up to 500 characters)
- Grant request type (*planning* or *implementation*)
- Request amount(s) (annual amount, if requesting a 2-year grant, and total)
- Project start and end dates
- Primary contact's name, title, email, and phone number

- Geographic area served by the project
- Race and ethnicity of *communities* that will be the focus of this proposal
- Verify compliance with [MeHAF's Nondiscrimination Policy](#)

A. **LOI Narrative Questions**

At the LOI stage, both *planning grant* and *implementation grant* applicants will briefly address the same two narrative questions. Please provide high-level summary responses that highlight the most important aspects of your project, focusing on how it meets the five program criteria. Since you will have limited space to respond to the LOI questions, and you have already included your mission and/or vision statements in your application (see above), there is no need to restate them.

Each question has a **2,000-character limit total** (including spaces - a maximum, not an expectation).

> **Question 1:** What is your proposed planning process/project? How will it address *health equity* for the *community(ies) of focus*?
>
> **Question 2:** What leadership and decision-making power does the *community(ies) of focus* have in the proposed work? How have they been involved in defining the need, the solution, and what success will look like?

B. **Preliminary Budget Narrative**

In a few sentences, please describe how you plan to use the funds being requested from MeHAF (not the individual budget line amounts). No MeHAF budget form is necessary for the LOI stage of the application.

C. **Attachments**

1. For applicants applying as a fiscal sponsor for another organization, submit a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining the fiscal sponsor relationship.

2. If not already submitted in the last 12 months and not listed on your website, submit a current Board list/Tribal Council list.

To upload a document as an attachment, follow the instructions in the MeHAF grants portal: click on "Upload a file", select the appropriate document from your computer, and click on "Open".

Step 2: Full Proposal (For invited applicants only, following the review of the LOIs.)

A. **Full Proposal Narrative Questions**

At the full proposal stage, you will be able to modify and add details to your original LOI responses. A set of prompts to guide your expanded responses are included in the full proposal questions. MeHAF will put the text of your LOI responses into the full proposal template in the MeHAF grants portal. At this stage, you are also asked to respond to a third question, which is different depending on whether you are applying for a *planning* or an *implementation grant*.

Each question has a **6,000-character limit total** (including spaces). Keep in mind that this is a maximum. You are not required or expected to use the full character limit.

> **Question 1:** What is your proposed planning process/project? Describe the need or opportunity your work 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:** What leadership and decision-making power does the *community(ies) of focus* have in the proposed work? What role(s) have they played and will they play in the planning process/project? Describe how the *community(ies) of focus* has been engaged 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.
>
> **Question 3 (*planning grants* only):** What key things do you hope to learn through your proposed planning process that will lead to the next phase of this work? What questions will be answered and what product(s) will be developed as a result of your planning?
>
> <div align="center">**OR**</div>
>
> **Question 3 (*implementation grants* only):** What will be different for the *community*(*ies*) *of focus* as a result of implementing this proposed project? What lasting changes will the *community* benefit from as a result of this work and how will they be sustained?

In addition, the full proposal must include the following:

B. Budget and Budget Narrative

Reviewers will consider how the proposed budget aligns with the scope of the work described. Funds requested must be proportionate with the work to be completed.

Submit a budget that details the income and expenses for the proposed work. If the application is for a two-year grant, a detailed budget is requested for the <u>first year only</u>. If funded, you will be asked to develop and submit a second-year budget near the end of your first grant year. Please review MeHAF's Budget Form Guidance and complete the MeHAF budget form and brief budget narrative, using the templates that can be downloaded within the application to explain how your organization will use the grant and other funds to carry out the proposed activities. We encourage you to read all of MeHAF's funding policies and guidance prior to completing the budget documents.

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

1) Amount for applicant organization;
2) Amount for partners or participants;
3) Although matching funds are not required in this program, be sure to include matching or in-kind support from the applicant, partner organizations or other funding sources in the appropriate columns, if applicable. This helps reviewers understand the resources available for the full scope of a project if the MeHAF grant is part of a larger whole.

Submit the **completed budget form and budget narrative** as attachments, by following the instructions in the MeHAF grants portal: click on "Upload a file", select the appropriate document from your computer, and then click on "Open".

- <u>Indirect Costs</u>: MeHAF encourages applicants 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 will provide funds in addition to a CRG grant to offset eligible accessibility-related expenses with the goal of reducing barriers to equitable participation in the project. Please note when reviewing our [Accessibility Expense Policy](#) that these expenses may not exceed 20% of the total grant amount. Accessibility Expense funds may be requested from the MeHAF program officer as needed once a grant is awarded and should not be included in your project budget. If you have questions about eligible uses for these funds that will impact the design of your project budget, please contact Frank Martinez Nocito to discuss.

C. Financial Capacity

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. In the full proposal stage, you will be asked to answer the questions below to help us best understand your organization's financial position. The questions will not be scored and funding decisions will not be affected by your responses.

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 concerns identified by your auditors or other professional advisors regarding financial controls, concerns regarding potential loss of charitable status with the IRS, or expected leadership changes. (yes/no)
   - If yes, please briefly describe.

2. Depending on the specific needs and circumstances, MeHAF may have expertise or capacity to provide varying types of technical assistance or referrals to resources that may be helpful. 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? (yes/no)
   - If yes, please briefly describe.

D. Other Attachment

If you have other material that is highly relevant to your project, the application provides the ability to upload one additional document. Briefly describe the contents of the optional attachment in the text box provided. Note, this is not a requirement or an expectation.

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 participating in funding decisions.

Letter of Inquiry: A staff team will review and discuss LOIs to select those invited to submit full proposals. Applicants will be notified about the status of their LOIs on Tuesday, **July 18**.

Full Proposal: A team of community members with relevant knowledge and experience, as well as MeHAF staff, will review full proposals. After reviewing and rating your application against the program criteria, the review team will meet to discuss their individual reviews and recommend a slate of

grants to MeHAF's Program and Grants Committee (PGC). To finalize their recommendations, the team will consider the ratings reviewers assigned to each application as well as the overall makeup of the proposed grantee cohort. This will include factors such as geographic distribution and ensuring a diversity of populations and issues covered by the group of recommended grantees, taken as a whole. MeHAF's PGC will carefully review the recommended slate and make the final funding decision. During the review process, MeHAF may contact applicants with clarifying questions and ask for responses either verbally or in writing.

- All invited applicants who submit a full proposal, regardless of funding decision, will be notified about the status of their applications by Wednesday, **November 1**. If you do not receive a notification email, please contact Holly Irish.

    o Applicants whose proposals are approved by MeHAF's PGC will receive an award letter and grant agreement by email.
    o Applicants not selected for funding will also receive an email notification and are encouraged to schedule an individual debriefing call with MeHAF staff to receive feedback on their application and to ask questions.
    o All applicants from both the LOI and full proposal stages will receive email notification of the final list of awards once all grant agreements have been finalized, on or about Friday, **December 1**.

GRANTEE EVALUATION, REPORTING, AND LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

Reporting expectations – grantees will:

- Have an interim check-in with a Program Officer at the mid-point of each year of funding;
- Submit a financial report 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.

MeHAF may also include a structured interview with grantees at the end of the project.

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

MeHAF will engage an evaluation consultant to work in cooperation with grantee organizations and the foundation. The evaluation plan is currently in development through a collaborative process with a team of existing program grantees. We expect that the foundation-supported evaluation work will include qualitative assessment of the degree to which the grant funding supported accomplishments, such as identification of barriers and facilitators to achieving the proposed activities, degree to which the work was framed and carried out with an equity perspective, the nature of *community* involvement, and actual or potential systems improvement.

QUESTIONS AND INFORMATIONAL SESSIONS

We strongly encourage applicants to join the informational sessions prior to completing both the LOI and full proposal, and to contact MeHAF staff with questions at any point in the process. Guidance and clarification of LOI and full proposal requirements may help you to prepare a stronger application.

All applicants should log into the MeHAF grants portal well in advance of the due dates to be sure you understand how to access and use the online application, and address any technical issues to keep them from interfering with a timely submission.

Answers to initial **Frequently Asked Questions** (FAQs) will be posted on MeHAF's web site on:

- Monday, **May 22** for the LOI; and
- Friday, **August 4** for the full proposal.

The FAQs may be updated periodically as applicants raise additional questions that are broadly applicable. Additionally, applicants that are invited to submit a full proposal will be emailed if/when an updated version of the FAQ is posted.