

Connecting Latino Communities to Advance Advocacy for Health Equity

ABOUT This Request for Proposals (RFP)

Blue Cross NC Foundation is issuing an RFP for a two-year, \$150,000/year (\$300,000 total per organization) grant opportunity to support up to six (6) Latino-led and serving organizations or coalitions to develop or deepen a specific focus on advocacy for health equity. Supported organizations will incorporate community engagement strategies to identify community health priorities. Additionally, the grantee organizations will come together to learn from each other and identify shared priorities.

APPLICANT ORGANIZATIONS AND ELIGIBILITY

Who is eligible for this funding opportunity?

- Led by and serving Latino communities – Organizations or coalitions led by, serving, and accountable to Latino people and communities. Both of the following must apply:
 - The executive director or CEO identifies as Latino/a/x or Hispanic.
 - The community served is primarily Latino/x or Hispanic as demonstrated by the demographics of those directly impacted by an organization’s work.
- Type of Organization:
 - Any nonprofit organization that is exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and is classified as “not a private foundation” under Section 509(a).
- OR -
 - A fiscally sponsored program – A group or project with a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization acting as a fiscal sponsor:
 - The fiscal sponsor is responsible for all legal aspects of the organization or project.
 - The fiscal sponsor is considered the grantee by the Foundation and agrees to be accountable to the Foundation for the programmatic and financial outcomes of the grant.
 - There is no minimum organizational budget requirement.

What about coalitions or collaboratives? What requirements have to be met?

Applications involving more than one group or organization are welcome; however, one organization will be the recipient of the grant and must be an established 501(c)(3) nonprofit or fiscally sponsored organization. Organizations and coalitions of any size are eligible to apply if the other eligibility criteria have been met regarding Latino/a/x or Hispanic led and community served is primarily Latino/x or Hispanic.

In the case of a fiscal sponsorship, what if the fiscal sponsor is not led by a Latino/a/x or Hispanic, but the project director (or equivalent) is led by a Latino/a/x or Hispanic? Is that project eligible?

Yes, so long as the project director identifies as Latino/a/x or Hispanic AND the community served is primarily Latino/x or Hispanic, as demonstrated by the demographics of those directly impacted by an organization’s work. The project director should also have autonomy over the program and expenditure

of funds. In phase 2, the Foundation will ask for documentation such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that defines the fiscal sponsor relationship.

Does the Foundation cover administrative fees for fiscal sponsors?

The Foundation recognizes that some organizations need to apply using a fiscal sponsor. In such circumstances, it is permissible for the fiscal sponsor to collect a small fee in return for managing the grant funds. We encourage the fiscal sponsor and the sponsor organization to work together to keep the administrative cost as low as possible.

Is it okay that my fiscal sponsor is out-of-state?

Out-of-state fiscal sponsors are allowed if the project and project director are based in North Carolina.

Are current grantees allowed to apply?

Yes, current grantees are eligible, although they must meet eligibility criteria as described in the [RFP](#).

Are universities allowed to apply?

Universities may apply as fiscal sponsors of a project or apply if they have a relatively independent or distinct division or unit that serves the Latino/x or Hispanic community with its own funding structure led by a person who identifies as Latino/a/x or Hispanic.

Is there a cap on indirect or overhead?

The Foundation does not have an established cap on indirect or overhead expenses. We understand various expenses are needed to operate an organization and trust that our grantees are using funds as necessary to achieve the agreed-upon grant outcomes. If you are affiliated with a university, please note that we cannot pay for any university overhead costs. These are costs associated with providing facilities and administrative support for sponsored activities and include operating and maintaining buildings and grounds, equipment, libraries, and providing administration at the university, college, and department levels.

Our organization is insured by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina – does that affect our eligibility?

No. The Blue Cross NC Foundation is an independent charitable organization, so an applicant's insurance provider has no bearing on its eligibility.

If my organization provides direct services, am I eligible?

Yes, although this is not a grant about expanding direct services. This grant could complement your direct service work and what you learn through those interactions. At the same time, this gives added capacity to engage, listen, connect and lift up the health equity priorities of the community you serve.

APPLICATION PROCESS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

How do I apply?

To access the online application portal, click [here](#). Applicants will provide basic organizational information and complete and submit a project narrative form. For questions about the proposal submission process, contact [Lasindra Webb](#).

If we use a fiscal sponsor, do they submit the application on our behalf?

Yes, the fiscal sponsor should complete the application on behalf of the sponsored organization. The sponsored organization should work closely with the fiscal sponsor to complete the application and provide the necessary information. The fiscal sponsor will assume the fiduciary responsibility for the grant, including receiving and disbursing the grant funds and reporting.

What are the selection criteria?

Letters of Intent (LOI) from eligible organizations will be assessed by foundation staff and external reviewers with particular attention to:

- Description of experience related to advocacy, community engagement, and addressing health equity issues.
- The role of community members, specifically those served by the organization, to inform organizational priorities.
- Overall geographic distribution of applicants.

How does the review process work?

The Foundation will review all applications with internal and external reviewers. LOI decision notifications will be communicated by April 8, 2022. Invited applicants will then submit additional organizational and financial details and participate in a conversation with Foundation staff to dive deeper into the organization's programming and capacity, community context, and the proposed work. Specific questions will be shared in advance of these conversations and will be provided with at least two weeks to prepare.

When will we know if we are selected as a grantee?

Applicants will be notified in early-June whether their proposal has been approved for funding.

How soon may I submit my Letter of Intent?

The application portal is now open to submit your Letter of Intent. You may submit anytime before midnight on March 2.

When will grantees be expected to start the project after being funded?

Funding will be given in July and expect work to begin then. The grant period officially starts in July and lasts until June 2024.

What is the duration of the grant?

This is a two-year grant opportunity; however, these grants are part of a longer-term commitment to advance advocacy for Latino health equity over the next five years. Learnings and activities from this two-year grant period will inform future grantmaking opportunities.

Do grant funds need to be used entirely during the 2-year grant cycle?

Yes, the organization should use all grant funds by the end of the 2-year grant cycle.

FUNDING DETAILS

This funding opportunity is focused on advocacy – what’s the difference between advocacy and lobbying?

Advocacy comes in a range of forms, including raising the voices of community members, educating neighbors on issues impacting health, gathering petition signatures to show public support of an issue, creating a coalition of people and organizations to address problems, and much more. Lobbying is a very specific type of advocacy with specific rules around it. For more information about nonprofit lobbying and advocacy, [follow this link](#). The bottom line is that most advocacy work isn’t lobbying. Grantees will receive training about the difference between advocacy and lobbying and about complying with state and federal regulations regarding lobbying.

Are nonprofit organizations allowed to lobby? Can we use this funding for lobbying?

Nonprofit organizations can lobby, so long as they comply with state and federal regulations. Funding from the Blue Cross NC Foundation cannot be earmarked for lobbying.

How do you define health equity?

We use the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s definition – that health equity is the opportunity for everyone to be as healthy as possible. Achieving health equity requires removing obstacles to health – such as poverty, discrimination, and geography – and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education, housing, safe environments, and health care.

What is a grassroots organization?

We consider grassroots organizations community-driven, meaning that the people directly impacted by the inequities in the systems are the ones who drive the organization’s strategy and play an active role in governance.

What falls under the umbrella of Social Drivers of Health?

Social drivers of health include any conditions that impact health risks and outcomes. These conditions include but are not limited to early childhood factors, education access and quality, social and community cohesion, employment and economic opportunities, discrimination, poverty, civic participation, food security and food systems, quality housing, physical and built environments, transportation, healthcare access, and health literacy. Through this funding, we seek to support organizations working to address and improve the social conditions impacting the health of Latino communities. Organizations do not have to be healthcare service providers.

Do you prioritize organizations working in coalitions?

No, we are not prioritizing coalitions over single organization applicants.

Are there any limitations on funding based on geographic location?

We have not established priority areas for this funding opportunity. We want applicants to describe where they are and their impact.

What type of projects are a good fit for funding?

We anticipate that most of the funding will support:

- Engaging community members to identify root causes of health disparities, racial inequities, and barriers to health.
- Listening deeply and lifting up community-identified health issues and priorities.

- Developing an active and aligned base of leaders and community members to identify policy solutions, engage decision-makers, and advocate for change.
- Integrating or developing a stronger health equity focus in programming or other organizational activities.
- Gathering and documenting data driven by community experience to make a case for necessary changes (e.g., policy, practice, administrative changes).

Once health priorities and community information are gathered, then what?

The first year of funding should be used to deepen a focus on health equity, advocacy, and increased community engagement to understand local health priorities. The second year of funding can be used for advocacy and engagement efforts and to address identified needs.

Can this grant fund a staff position and overhead costs?

Yes, we anticipate funds will be used to cover the costs of staff positions to do the work of the grant. These funds can pay for added staff capacity, training and supplies or other overhead costs. This can include and is not limited to stipends for community participants, engagement efforts and all necessary convening and communications costs to listen, learn and lift up the health equity priorities. If you are affiliated with a university, please note that we cannot pay for any university overhead costs. These are costs associated with providing facilities and administrative support for sponsored activities and include operating and maintaining buildings and grounds, equipment, libraries, and providing administration at the university, college, and department levels.

What are the reporting requirements?

The Foundation requires annual progress reporting. Consistent with our approach to "Operational Excellence," we have adopted conversational reporting and do not require organizations to submit a written report. The Program Officer(s) will meet with grantees to conduct quarterly and annual learning calls to discuss the grant's progress. We will require a limited amount of financial reporting.