

Request for Proposals

Connecting Latino Communities to Advance Advocacy for Health Equity

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This document describes the purpose of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation’s “Connecting Latino Communities to Advance Advocacy for Health Equity” Request for Proposals (RFP), eligibility criteria, and the procedures to follow in submitting a proposal. It is requested that proposals are submitted using the Foundation’s [online application](#) portal; however alternative submission arrangements can be requested by contacting:

- Marquita Mbonu at Marquita.mbonu@bcbsncfoundation.org
- Valerie Stewart at valerie.stewart@bcbsncfoundation.org

Note: () denotes a key term defined at the end of the document for shared understanding*

Connecting Latino Communities to Advance Advocacy for Health Equity

Background

North Carolina's Hispanic and Latino* populations make up 10 percent (a little over 1 million) of the total population, with a projected population increase to 1.7 million by 2035. *(A note on language: Throughout the rest of this document, we will use the word Latino, however we acknowledge that these categories have different specific meanings and individuals have distinct preferences that reflect their own self-identity with respect to language, country of origin, and other demographic categories.)* While we acknowledge the vibrancy and strength of this community, we also recognize the health challenges many people who identify as Latino face. Community conditions are linked to adverse health outcomes, and accessing resources needed to be healthy such as having safe housing, nutritious food, education, transportation, and health care can be limited. We know that systemic racism, language barriers, and citizenship status all play a role in these disparities.

With a growing population, there is an opportunity to strengthen a unified voice for Latino health in the state. Our approach seeks to support organizations, coalitions, and grassroots groups, particularly those with strong ties in the community*, to deepen their focus on health equity* and advocacy* and come together as a powerful voice for change and more significant influence at the state, local, and community levels. Through this funding, we seek to support organizations working to address and improve the social conditions impacting the health of Latino communities.

Overview of Funding Opportunity

Blue Cross NC Foundation is issuing a Request for Proposal (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. Each organization will have access to technical assistance that supports their unique needs. These grants are part of a \$6 million commitment to advance advocacy for Latino health equity over the next five years. Learning and activities from this two-year grant period will inform future grantmaking opportunities supporting both local and statewide work after 2024.

Overarching Goals

The primary goal of this grant support is to build the foundation for a common health equity agenda that reflects the diversity of Latino experiences across the state. This work will deepen trust and relationships in the community to connect lived experiences at the local and regional levels to shape and influence policy changes in the future.

The funding opportunity aims to:

- Support organizations and coalitions as they develop or deepen their focus on health equity and advocacy.
- Increase community engagement and advocacy at the local and regional levels.

- Develop an understanding about local priorities and how they may contribute to a common agenda to advance Latino health equity statewide.

Description of Funded Work

This funding opportunity is specifically designed to support organizations or coalitions led by, serving, and accountable to Latino people and communities working to address health inequities currently facing these communities. In this first phase, the work will have a local and regional focus. Funded projects should include the following five elements:

1. Engage community members to identify root causes of health disparities, racial inequities*, and barriers to health.
2. Listen deeply, learn alongside, and lift up community-identified health issues and priorities.
3. Develop an active and aligned base of leaders and community members to identify policy solutions, engage decision-makers, and advocate for change.
4. Integrate or develop a stronger health equity focus in programming or other organizational activities.
5. Gather and document data driven by community experience to make a case for necessary changes (e.g., policy, practice, administrative changes).

While grantees' work will include the elements listed above, the strategies and tactics can vary. Over time local/regional projects will be supported to come together to share their experience.

Eligibility Criteria

- 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.

- Please Note: Coalitions – 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.

Who Should Apply?

We seek to partner with organizations that share this vision and embody the following characteristics:

- Collaborative – Organizations that work collaboratively across differences and across sectors to amplify community voices and issues. Currently working locally and willing to reach beyond to create statewide alignment, connections, and engaging with allies beyond Latino serving groups.
- Cross-Sector Partnerships – Organizations have experience engaging multiple sectors including but not limited to health care, public health, local governments, school systems, and more.
- Engaged in Advocacy – Organizations have experience or desire to advocate for improving changing community conditions.
- Grounded in Community – Organizations will be deeply grounded in the community as demonstrated by the inclusion of community members in the organization’s decision-making and strategies.
- Health Equity – Organizations who want to deepen their focus on social drivers of health* (including, but not limited to access to care) and other conditions that contribute to health equity.

Grantee Experience

Over the next two years, we will focus on establishing our relationships to and with one another while continuing to build on informal and formal networks across regions, working together to advance health equity. These are just a few of the expected activities:

- Participate in shared learning opportunities. Based on prior experience, we anticipate several in-person meetings each year. The Foundation is committed to providing hybrid/virtual options with respect to conditions related to COVID-19, as well as language support for Spanish-speaking participants.
- Engage in ongoing conversation with the Foundation, potentially including participating in decision-making to identify consultants and facilitators serving the grantees, defining the parameters of technical assistance support, and a future external evaluation.
- Participate in learning and evaluation activities. Grantees may be asked to provide qualitative or quantitative data as part of reporting processes, complete surveys, and participate in sense-making opportunities to strengthen learning across projects and inform future grantmaking.
- Participate in training opportunities and technical assistance including learning about state and federal rules on lobbying* and other topics determined by grantees.

Funding Partnership

As a partner with our grantees throughout this work, in addition to providing funding support, our Foundation commits to:

- Engage in thought partnership with grantees with a focus on listening to grantees for understanding.
- Support grantees to achieve their goals and to adapt to new and perhaps unexpected circumstances.
- Solicit, and be open to, direct, constructive feedback about our approach to, and implementation of, this project and specific opportunities to change course.
- Provide open and regular communication about any changes or updates that might have an impact on grantees.
- Operate in consistency with our organizational values: authenticity, collaboration, curiosity, equity, health, and leadership.

How to Apply

Part 1:

All applicants will complete an [online Letter of Intent \(LOI\)](#) to provide information about the organization's community engagement, advocacy, and health equity experience. Within the Online Letter of Inquiry, you will be asked to upload the completed [Project Narrative form](#). Prospective applicants will have the opportunity to schedule a conversation with Foundation staff before submitting a LOI. This will help us get to know you and will help you determine if your organization is a potential fit for this funding opportunity.

To sign up for a 15-minute conversation, [follow this link](#).

LOIs from eligible organizations will be reviewed 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.

LOI decision notifications will be communicated by April 8, 2022 and a smaller group of participants will be invited to participate in a second phase of the proposal process.

Part 2:

Following receipt of the LOIs, the review committee will invite a group of applicants (by April 8, 2022) to move forward to part two of the process. Invited applicants will 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. Applicants will be notified in early-June whether their proposal has been approved for funding.

Timeline:

Deadline or Activity	Date(s)
RFP Official Release and LOI web form is open	February 2, 2022
Q&A Webinar for prospective applicants	February 9, 2022
Foundation staff available for consultation	February 15 – March 1, 2022
LOI web portal submissions due	March 2, 2022
LOI decision notifications	By April 8, 2022
Invited applicant interviews	April 25 – May 13, 2022
Grantees selected and notified	June 2022

Learn More: Informational Webinar

On Wednesday, February 9 at 1 pm, the Blue Cross NC Foundation will hold a webinar to discuss the funding opportunity and answer prospective applicants' questions.

You can register for the webinar [at this link](#).

A recording of the webinar will be posted on the Blue Cross NC Foundation website along with written Frequently Asked Questions.

For questions about this funding initiative contact:

- Marquita Mbonu at Marquita.mbonu@bcbsncfoundation.org
- Valerie Stewart at valerie.stewart@bcbsncfoundation.org

For questions about the LOI submission process contact:

- Lasindra Webb at Lasindra.Webb@bcbsncfoundation.org

Appendix: Key Terms

Advocacy: In the context of this RFP, advocacy means making a case for changes to a system. Advocacy can take many forms that are legally permissible for nonprofits, including community organizing, public education, research, litigation, and lobbying (see note below on lobbying).

Capacity Building: The process by which individuals, organizations, groups, or communities obtain, improve, and retain skills, knowledge, tools, or other resources to reach self-identified goals and objectives.

Community: In the context of this RFP, community means a group or groups of Latino people who live in the same area (such as a county, city, town, or neighborhood), or have common interests who come together with a sense of belonging such as occupational, linguistic, national origin, or others.

Geographic Focus: In the context of this RFP, this refers to the organization's geographical area of influence. For example, an organization may be located in one county and have a network they can mobilize in other parts of the state.

Health Equity: 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. *(Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation)*

Hispanic, Latino, Latinx: While we have used Latino throughout the RFP, we acknowledge the diversity and identities within the community and seek to be as inclusive as possible. We recognize these categories have specific meanings, and individuals have distinct preferences that reflect their self-identity regarding language, country of origin, and other demographic categories.

Lobbying: The IRS defines lobbying as communication with a legislator that expresses a view about specific legislation. Grassroots lobbying is defined as communication with the public that expresses a view about specific legislation and includes a call to action. Foundations are limited by the IRS in supporting lobbying, and grant dollars may not be earmarked for lobbying in your budget.

Racial Equity: Racial equity is both a process and an outcome. Racial equity is achieved when racial identity no longer predicts, in a statistical sense, how one fares in life. Racial equity includes work to address the root causes of inequities, not just their symptoms.

Social Drivers of Health: Social drivers of health are non-medical, social, and environmental conditions that impact health. The conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age significantly influence their health outcomes. These include income, safe and adequate housing, education, employment, access to transportation, healthy foods, and social connection/support. *(Source: The Physicians Foundation - abbreviated)*

About the Foundation

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation is a private, charitable foundation established as an independent entity by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina in 2000. Over the past two decades, the organization has worked with - and supported - nonprofit organizations, government entities, and community partnerships across the state, investing \$173 million into North Carolina through more than 1,200 grants, collaborations, and special initiatives. Within its focus areas of early childhood, healthy communities, healthy food, and oral health, the Foundation strives to address the key drivers of health, taking a flexible approach designed to meet identified needs in partnership with the community.

Learn more at bcbsncfoundation.org

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