

Funding Opportunity

Supporting American Indian Capacity to Improve Health

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation (Blue Cross NC Foundation) is seeking to support North Carolina-based American Indian organizations to advance their vision for a healthy community, as well as supporting intertribal collaboration to foster stronger connections for future work together.

Issue Date: April 14, 2022

Submission Deadline: June 15, 2022, by 5:00 p.m. EST
this date is flexible as described later in this document

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This document describes this funding opportunity, eligibility criteria, and how to respond.

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

Supporting American Indian Capacity to Improve Health

Background

North Carolina has the largest American Indian population east of the Mississippi River and the eighth largest in the United States. Tribal nations in North Carolina are diverse and have vibrant and strong cultures and communities. American Indians throughout the state showed innovation and strength during COVID-19, yet the pandemic has disproportionately impacted them due to long-standing health inequities*. Investment in the health and well-being of tribal communities across the state is critical.

Considering the extraordinary 2021 state allocation of American Rescue Plan Act funding that will soon be available to most of the tribes in North Carolina, the Blue Cross NC Foundation engaged tribal leaders to understand their current needs and visions for the future. These conversations informed this funding opportunity which seeks to strengthen tribal infrastructure* and capacity * with the understanding that these are critical components of Tribal self-governance, a cornerstone of long-term tribal health and wellness.

Overview of Funding Opportunity

The Blue Cross NC Foundation is issuing this four-year funding opportunity to support American Indian infrastructure and capacity to enhance their ability to advance their vision for a healthy community. Additionally, this funding opportunity will support intertribal collaboration to foster shared learning and deeper connections for future work together.

- \$400,000 over four years (\$100,000 paid each year)

At the end of each grant year, grantees will be asked to report on how the funds contributed to their goals for the grant period and identify priorities for the following year.

Overarching Goals

The goal of this funding is to support tribal communities in North Carolina to strengthen their organizational infrastructure and capacity and to ultimately improve the health and well-being of their communities. In addition to supporting individual organizations, we will also support intertribal connections and partnerships to help strengthen individual and collective capacity to serve their members and communities and build a healthier future.

These funds are not intended for program development or implementation but to develop competencies, strategies, systems, and structures that strengthen tribal capacity to advance their vision for a healthy community.

Description of Funded Work

This opportunity is specifically for American Indian organizations in North Carolina to support their organizational infrastructure and capacity for effective self-governance, ultimately leading to a healthier community.

Early grant activities may be more oriented toward capacity building and planning to allow for a growing focus on health over the four-year period. We understand that the first phase of the grant period is likely to focus on activities such as hiring staff, planning, and other early work necessary to support future actions

more directly focused on advancing health equity*. In addition, we expect that during this period, we will also learn more about what types of activities may be supported by state-distributed pandemic recovery funding for eligible tribes (resulting from the American Rescue Plan Act) and other potential funding streams and how these funding streams can work together to maximize impact.

As part of the proposal development process, we will first have a conversation to learn more about your specific needs and goals; however, here are some examples of potential phase one, or first year, grant activities:

- Strategic planning including community/member engagement (e.g., meeting space, community stipends for participation in planning, consultant fees).
- Paid staff and/or technology to support various infrastructure needs (e.g., grants management and reporting, bookkeeping, accounting, etc.).
- Fundraising and earned income development strategies.
- Leadership development and expansion.
- Communications planning and development.
- Staff time to participate in collaborative activities with other tribes.
- Critical tribal infrastructure (e.g., securing physical office space for increased staff collaboration and effectiveness, repairs and renovations to tribal facilities and grounds, enhanced technology for tribal governance). **Note: While the Foundation does not typically support capital expenses, we will consider these - on a limited basis - as it relates to this opportunity.**

In addition to this direct funding opportunity, we will invite grantees to participate in a grantee-driven “Learning Collaborative” coordinated by a culturally competent Native consultant for the purpose of information exchange, mutual support, coordination, and collaboration, and connecting to Foundation-supported technical assistance based on needs – up to 6 times a year.

For training, technical assistance, Learning Collaborative gatherings, and other meetings, the Foundation plans both virtual and face-to-face events. Face-to-face activities will be convened according to our most up-to-date policies and protocols with respect to COVID-19. Presently, face-to-face events are being permitted.

Eligibility Criteria

- Eligible Organizations:
 - Coharie Indian Tribe
 - Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians
 - Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe
 - Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina
 - Meherrin Indian Tribe
 - Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation
 - Sappony
 - Waccamaw Siouan Tribe Cumberland County Association for Indian People
 - Guilford Native American Association
 - Metrolina Native American Association
 - Triangle Native American Society
 - Tuscarora Nation of North Carolina (not a state or federally recognized tribe)

- Grantees for this funding opportunity must be nonprofit organizations that are exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.
- There is no minimum organizational budget requirement- organizations of all sizes are eligible.

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 continuously improve.
- 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

Step 1: Informational Webinar

On Tuesday, May 3 from 9:30 – 11:00a.m., the Blue Cross NC Foundation will host a webinar to discuss this funding opportunity and answer prospective applicants' questions.

You can register for the webinar [at this link](#). A recording will be posted on our [website](#) shortly after the webinar for those who cannot attend in person.

Step 2: Proposal Development Conversation

To share more about your specific needs, goals, and priorities, please schedule a one-hour conversation with our staff. During this call, we will discuss the following questions:

1. What types of infrastructure and capacity-building support does your nation/organization need to build toward a larger focus on health and well-being in the future?
2. What do you want to prioritize over the next 12 months? *We understand that this may change over the course of the grant.*
3. What do you hope this funding will make possible for the health and well-being of your community?

Following this conversation, we will share our notes back to you for your review and adjustments. These notes will serve as your proposal for the first year of this grant period.

To schedule a conversation, [follow this link](#).

Step 3: Organizational Information

All applicants will complete and submit information about their organization and a first-year budget through our [online application portal](#). This will be done after the Proposal Development Conversation.

Step 4: Reporting and Future Grant Years

At the end of each grant year, grantees will be asked to report on how the funds contributed to their goals for the grant period and identify priorities and a budget for the following year. This will help the Foundation understand how capacity building and other activities contribute to tribal nations and urban Indian organization's ability to advance their vision for a healthy community.

Timeline:

Next Steps	Date(s)
Funding Opportunity Announced	April 14, 2022
Informational Webinar (Step 1)	May 3, 2022 9:30 – 11:00 a.m.
Proposal Development Conversations (Step 2)	May 4 – May 25, 2022
Organizational and budget submissions due through web portal (Step 3)	June 15, 2022
Grantee notification and announcement	July 2022

Note: If this timeframe is too compressed for your organization, alternative arrangements can be made to schedule conversations and submissions at a later date.

Questions

A recording of the orientation webinar will be posted on the Blue Cross NC Foundation [website](#) along with written Frequently Asked Questions.

For questions about this funding opportunity contact:

- Marquita Mbonu at marquita.mbonu@bcbsncfoundation.org
- Merry Davis at merry.davis@bcbsncfoundation.org

For questions about the organizational information submission process (Step 3) contact:

- Lasindra Webb at lasindra.webb@bcbsncfoundation.org

Appendix: Key Terms

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. (Source: *Grantmakers for Effective Organizations*)

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*)

Health Inequities: Avoidable differences in health outcomes between different groups of people due to unfair systems that result in the uneven distribution of resources which negatively affect people’s living conditions, access to health care, and overall health status. (Source: *Grantmakers for Effective Organizations*)

Tribal/Nonprofit Infrastructure: The staffing, strategies, systems, space, processes, and procedures that are necessary to meet the mission and conduct the operations of the organization. (Source: *Grantmakers for Effective Organizations*)

Tribal/Organizational Capacity: The wide range of capabilities, knowledge, and resources that organizations need to be effective, including but not limited to leadership, financial management, technology, and communications. While all these capacities are important, it may not be necessary for one organization to be equally strong on all capacities, and certain capacities may be more critical at certain points than others. (Source: *Grantmakers for Effective Organizations*)

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 \$178 million into North Carolina through more than 1,200 grants. 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.