

Healthy Food Prescription Community of Practice Lead

Request for Services

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation (Blue Cross NC Foundation) is requesting proposals for facilitation, convening, technical assistance, and strategic communications support for a cohort of 10 Healthy Food Prescription programs that are working to strengthen their program models, while partnering with health care and moving toward more equitable and sustainable operations.

RFS Release Date: June 15, 2022
Questions Due: June 24, 2022
Full Applications Due: July 27, 2022
Contract Duration: October 2022 – December 2024
Response Format: *Submit via [online application portal](#)*

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This document describes the purpose of this request for services, 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 Lasindra Webb, Grants Manager, at lasindra.webb@bcbsncfoundation.org.

Note: *Pre-submission inquiries regarding this opportunity may be addressed via email to merry.davis@bcbsncfoundation.org and valerie.stewart@bcbsncfoundation.org. Responses will be compiled and answered via a Frequently Asked Questions document posted to the Foundation's website on July 1, 2022.*

Background

In 2021, the Blue Cross NC Foundation funded a scan of Food is Medicine activities in North Carolina looking specifically at interventions where health care providers are partnering with community-based nonprofit organizations to connect patients with healthy food. These Healthy Food Prescription programs are a component of the Food is Medicine movement and involve a health care provider, who assesses and identifies patients with diet-related disease and/or food insecurity and prescribes a food-based intervention that goes beyond nutrition education. The scan included surveys and interviews with 18 leaders from community organizations and 16 from health care organizations which were identified through a snowball sampling approach where each respondent identified other potential participants. The scan, and [resulting report](#), provides a baseline assessment of Food is Medicine activities in the state with a specific focus on the barriers and opportunities to build, sustain, scale and spread these efforts. These findings have informed this request for services which complements our investments in 10 existing healthy food prescription programs (see appendix for details on the 10 funded programs) to enhance their capacity and seeks to bring the grantees together as a learning community, connect them with technical resources and assistance to support their efforts individually and collectively, and spread awareness of the impact of their work.

Overarching Goals

The overarching goal of our Food is Medicine/Healthy Food Prescription investments is to help position North Carolina's community-based nonprofits as a partner of choice for health care organizations interested in Healthy Food Prescriptions for their patients and increase Food is Medicine efforts across the state. Where applicable, the learnings will also inform other community-based nonprofit and health care partnerships to address a range of social needs of patients beyond food. Through direct grantmaking, a supportive community of practice, technical assistance, strategic communications, and cross model research and evaluation, investments are intended to:

- Strengthen the infrastructure and organizational capacities of community-based nonprofits to improve and/or grow their Healthy Food Prescription programs.
- Develop peer connections in the Food is Medicine field to enhance learning and peer support.
- Elevate Food is Medicine and Healthy Food Prescriptions as a key opportunity for collaboration among health care, food-focused community-based nonprofits, and local agriculture.
- Generate evidence on the capacities necessary for equitable and sustainable partnership between health care organizations and community-based nonprofits.

Overview of Consulting Opportunity

The Blue Cross NC Foundation seeks a vendor to provide facilitation, convening, technical assistance, and strategic communications support for a cohort of 10 Healthy Food Prescription programs. Each program is receiving grant funding of \$200,000 over two years to strengthen their program models with the aim of moving toward more equitable and sustainable operations. See more details on each program in the Appendix.

The selected vendor will work closely with the evaluation partner for this body of work. The evaluation will focus on identifying essential factors for equitable and sustainable partnerships between health care and community-based organizations and gathering lessons learned from the 10 Health Food Prescription programs. The vendor providing facilitation, convening, technical assistance, and strategic communications support should expect to engage in regular meetings and communications with the evaluation team to provide input on the overall design and methods for the evaluation and support data collection along the way.

Scope of Work and Deliverables

Scope of Work: Twenty-six months

- **Convening and facilitation:** Support a practitioner-driven collaborative for the purposes of information exchange, mutual support, field coordination, providing technical assistance and connections to other key food is medicine stakeholders. The facilitator will convene grantees, organize peer learning, and curate resources to address technical assistance needs. The Community of Practice will include grantees and potentially others emerging/active in the Food is Medicine field including other community-based nonprofits and health care payers and providers depending on the interests of the grantees. This collaborative is expected to meet regularly with a mix of virtual and in-person gatherings (estimated at up to 10 times a year). *Please note:* Face-to-face activities will be convened according to our most up-to-date policies and protocols with respect to COVID-19.
- **Technical assistance:** Support individual and collective practitioner-identified technical assistance needs, e.g., partnership development, evaluation design and implementation, contracting/legal, technology to support vendor relationships, compliance with patient privacy laws, financing models, advocacy, and interfacing with online referral, electronic health record, and billing systems, etc. Approach to be determined in collaboration with the grantees. *Please note:* technical assistance requiring specific subject matter expertise can be provided by a subcontractor.
- **Strategic communications:** Share and elevate the Food is Medicine/Healthy Food Prescriptions as a key issue/opportunity for health care, food access organizations, and local agriculture in North Carolina, with the goal of raising awareness and informing health care policy and practice changes. *Please note:* communications can be led and executed by a subcontractor.
- **Other:** Participate in conversations to support Foundation-led cross-model research and evaluation activities to capture and share learning more broadly with the field. Through the evaluative work we hope to identify key factors that contribute to effective, equitable, and sustainable Healthy Food Prescription programs and partnerships. Along with grantees, the Foundation may ask this partner to engage in other evaluative activities including surveys, sense-making sessions, and focus groups to support learning.

Responsibilities and Deliverables will include:

Convening, Facilitation, and Technical Assistance

- Co-design with grantees Community of Practice norms and practices, such as meeting frequency and agenda setting.
- Schedule, plan, and facilitate regular cohort meetings, both virtual and in-person.
- Develop a process for identifying individual and collective technical assistance needs of the grantees.
- Lead the identification and subcontracting with technical assistance providers to support grantees (with grantee and Foundation input).
- Contract for and manage offerings from sub-contracted technical assistance providers.
- Participate in evaluation activities with the evaluation partner.
- Schedule and plan an annual gathering of grantees.
- Communicate Community of Practice successes, needs, and challenges to Foundation staff.
- Determine process for expanding the group or bringing in other key stakeholder voices, e.g., health care, policy makers.
- Plan and implement a broader Food is Medicine convening.

Strategic Communications

- Engage with stakeholders in North Carolina’s Food is Medicine – Healthy Food Prescriptions landscape to inform messaging priorities and key audiences, in turn establishing the foundation for broad communications support.
- Complete an environmental scan of existing communications research and messaging to complement the development of this work.
- Conduct or oversee the appropriate level of additional research to determine awareness, perceptions, narratives, barriers, and opportunities to achieving the determined objectives.
- Develop a communications strategy to meet the determined objectives, including messaging and a dissemination plan for use by a variety of stakeholders.
- Execute on emerging communications deliverables identified throughout the duration of the engagement.

Desired Skills, Qualities, and Attributes

- Experience facilitating learning communities.
- Experience working with community-based organizations across a spectrum of capacity needs, e.g., partnership development, tracking/impact measurement systems, financial planning/modeling.
- Experience working with, and communicating about, issues of race, racism, and racial equity.
- Committed to, and experience with, integrating racial equity principles in cohort facilitation.
- Demonstrates an understanding of the dynamics between nonprofit and philanthropic sectors.
- Experience in issue-oriented communications including strategy, research, message development, and execution.
- Experience with movement building and the role of strategic communications.
- Knowledge of how health care is delivered and financed in North Carolina.
- Understanding of the North Carolina local food system and its connection to health, equity, and rural reinvestment.

The Foundation places a high value for diversity in our vendor selection. We strongly encourage Black, Latino, and other consultants of color to apply for this opportunity. We have a preference to engage with North Carolina based consultants; however, this opportunity is not limited to organizations or individuals based in the state.

Anticipated Budget and Timeline

Up to \$500,000 is available for this work over 26 months, including any subcontracts for technical assistance or strategic communications.

Key Activity*	Estimated Date
RFS Released	June 15, 2022
Submit Questions about the RFS or Scope of Work	By June 24, 2022
Answers to Questions Posted to Website	July 1, 2022
Proposals Due	July 27, 2022
Finalist Conversations	August 2022
RFS Decision Notification	September 2022
Contract Start	October 2022
Contract End	December 31, 2024

Proposal Requirements

Please submit your proposal in one file (Adobe PDF format preferred) through the [Blue Cross NC Foundation Portal](#) no later than 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 27.

Please include the following materials in your proposal – in no more than 6 pages (organization information will be collected separately in the online portal):

1. Proposal

- a. **Values and approach.** Describe the values that guide your work and how they show up in the way you approach your work.
- b. **Approach to services.** Please describe your proposed approach to this work, including:
 - Method of developing shared norms and practices among grantees.
 - Approach to identifying the direction/focus of the Community of Practice as well as agenda development and meeting facilitation to maximize engagement while reducing burden on grantees.
 - Strategies for working with grantees to identify individual grantee and collective technical assistance needs.
 - Experience with, and approach to, supporting strategic communications.
 - Anticipated challenges and how you might navigate these over the course of the work.
- c. **Organizational history and qualifications for this project.** Elevate information on the desired skills, qualities, and attributes outlined above. Please include information regarding the proposed project lead and team members.
- d. **Budget.** Up to \$500,000 is available for this work (including possible subcontracted work). Please submit a budget based on your approach that shows how you would allocate this budget. (Not included in the page count.)

2. Attachments

- a. Please provide any relevant case studies or work samples related to your previous experience with managing or executing strategic communications. (Not included in the page count.)

Assumptions

The Blue Cross NC Foundation is not liable for costs incurred by any firm or individual associated with the preparation of a response to this RFS.

Proposal Review & Evaluation

Proposals will be reviewed based on the requirements of this RFS. A preliminary review will be completed by Foundation staff, providing cohort members with an opportunity to review a smaller subset of proposals. We anticipate a decision by the end of September 2022.

Contract Duration and Compensation

The duration of the contract is from October 2022 – December 31, 2024. The compensation limit for this contract is \$500,000.

Foundation Contact

If you have any questions, please contact Merry Davis at merry.davis@bcbsncfoundation.org or Valerie Stewart at valerie.stewart@bcbsncfoundation.org.

About the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina 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.

Appendix

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation is partnering with the following 10 [Healthy Food Prescription programs](#):

- **Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP):** “Farm Fresh Produce Prescription” program provides weekly financial incentives for fresh, local fruits and vegetables from farmers markets and food boxes from farms to eligible patients in Western North Carolina. Mountain Area Health Education Center is the primary health care partner and serves Western North Carolina. (Buncombe County/rural)
- **Conetoe Family Life Center, Inc.:** Produce prescription program is in partnership with ECU Health (formally Vidant Health) focused on supplying fresh produce boxes from their farm with wraparound supports and resources. (Edgecombe County/rural)
- **Feast Down East:** Fulfilling healthy food vouchers in partnership with Novant Health in the Cape Fear region via their Local Motive Mobile Farmers’ Market. Also participating as a sub-contractor for food in the Healthy Opportunities Pilot with Community Care of the Lower Cape Fear. (Pender County/rural)
- **Green Rural Redevelopment Organization** Supporting healthy food boxes and medically tailored meals and wraparound supports and services specifically for the Haliwa-Saponi Tribal region in partnership with Beckford Medical Facilities and Vidant Health. Also serving as a food vendor in the Healthy Opportunities Pilot with Access East for the northeast region. (Halifax, Warren County/rural)
- **Highland Neighborhood Association (fiscally sponsored by Kintegra Health):** Grab-and-go prepared community-based meal program run by RAMS Kitchen in partnership with Kintegra Health and CaroMont Health. (Gaston County/urban)
- **Hunger and Health Coalition:** Medically-tailored healthy food boxes and nutrition education in partnership with Appalachian Regional Healthcare System and local physician offices. Serving as a vendor in the Healthy Opportunities Pilot with Impact Health. (Watauga County/rural)
- **Loaves and Fishes Friendship Trays:** Medically tailored food boxes in partnership with Novant Health Heart & Vascular Institute, Atrium Health Sanger Heart & Vascular, C.W. Williams Community Health Center, and Care Ring. (Mecklenburg County/urban)
- **Reinvestment Partners:** Produce prescription provides \$40 per month via an electronic benefit linked to a retail grocery loyalty card in partnership with various health care organizations and payers. Participating in all three Healthy Opportunities Pilot regions as a vendor. (All 100 North Carolina counties/urban and rural)

- **SHARE Winston-Salem, Inc.:** Medically tailored food boxes in partnership with United Health Centers a Federally Qualified Health Center, and Wake Forest School of Medicine. (Forsyth County/urban)
- **TRACTOR Food & Farms:** Provides produce boxes in partnerships with multiple regional health care providers. (Avery, Buncombe, Henderson, Madison, Mitchell, and Yancey Counties/rural)