

Request for Proposals

New Access to Dental Care

Issue Date:	March 20, 2024
Submission Deadline:	April 19, 2024 by 11:59 p.m. EST
Contact:	Daijah Street Davis Director, Oral Health Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation daijah.davis@bcbsncfoundation.org

Overview

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation is issuing grants of up to \$200,000 to support new or expanded access at safety net dental clinics. These grants are intended to serve as a portion of the overall cost to open new or significantly expand existing safety net dental clinics, and grantees are encouraged to leverage this investment to secure additional new funds or supplement existing funds for the project. Up to \$1,000,000 is allocated for this funding opportunity, which will support approximately five clinics.

Background

Strong safety net clinics play an important role in supporting access to care as facilities with a mission to provide services regardless of an individual's ability to pay. However, of the 299 community health center locations in North Carolina, only 49 currently offer dental services. Similarly, in the network of 73 free and charitable clinics, only 21 offer dental services on-site, with some offering as few as one evening each month. Of the local health departments that offer dental, a majority serve children and pregnant people exclusively. This funding opportunity will contribute to increasing the number of access points for dental care across the state.

Eligibility and Selection Criteria

Organization and Service Type

- Mission commitment to provide care regardless of insurance status or ability to pay.
 - *Examples: Health Department, Federally Qualified Health Center, 501(c)(3) clinic, Free and Charitable Clinic*

- Launching new or significantly expanding existing safety net dental services.
- Plan to provide a dental home for patients, defined as:
 - “The ongoing relationship between the dentist and the patient, inclusive of all aspects of oral health care delivered in a safe, culturally sensitive, individualized, comprehensive, continuous, accessible, coordinated, compassionate, and patient- and family-centered way regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual or gender identity, medical status, family structure, or financial circumstances. “ [AAPD, 2023](#)
- Funds can be utilized for either a mobile unit or physical location if other criteria are met.

Other Requirements

The following are required to be considered for funding:

- Sound model for sustaining clinic operations.
- Demonstration of regional or interprofessional collaboration to increase clinic impact.
 - *Examples: coordination with other clinics to share dental services at one facility, plans for accepting patient referrals from other community clinics or resources, interprofessional collaboration with prenatal or primary care clinics, etc.*
- Have or will secure other funds for the project. Funds from this grant should serve as no more than 20% of the total budget.*
- Facility must have commitment from a dentist to work in the program.*

**Please Note: requirements with an asterisk do not need to be completed for selection but do need to be completed prior to fund disbursement. Applicants recommended for funding will have two years to attest to their completion and receive the funds.*

Selection Criteria

In addition to meeting the above requirements, applications must clearly demonstrate project contribution to increased access to dental care in counties, regions, or geographic communities with low access. Access to care, as referenced in this request for proposals, is inclusive of geographic and cost accessibility, and accessibility to care with appropriate language accommodations and cultural appropriateness. Applications that demonstrate plans to impact regions with higher access needs, such as those without permanent safety net dental facilities, will be prioritized in selection.

Funding Partnership Commitment

As a partner with our grantees throughout this work, our Foundation commits to:

- Authentic engagement with grantees with a focus on listening to understand.
- Support grantees to achieve their goals and to adapt to new or 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 and adapt.
- Provide timely communication about any changes or updates that might impact grantees.
- Operate in consistency with our organizational values working to assure that everyone in North Carolina has the opportunity to be as healthy as possible.

How to Apply

Eligibility Survey

Prospective applicants should review the requirements above and complete this eligibility [survey](#) to determine fit. If the submitted responses indicate eligibility, the prospective applicant will receive a link to schedule a consultation call with Foundation staff to further evaluate this opportunity.

Consultation Call

In addition to questions posed by the potential applicant, this conversation will cover the following:

- What are the general goals of your project? What does this make possible for oral health in your community? What impact do you anticipate related to access to care, including, but not limited to, number of patients served?
- Where are you planning to launch this clinic or mobile unit? Which counties will be serviced? Who is your target population as you increase access? What practices are you incorporating to support patient needs beyond your dental clinic's services (consider social drivers of health, services outside of your array, referrals to other services within your organization, etc.).
- How much funding are you planning to request? What is the estimated total project budget? What are your major budget categories and the cost for each (e.g., equipment, construction, lease/rent, inventory, initial staffing, etc.)?
- Discussion of the general project timeline, including goal timeline for securing all funding, "breaking ground," and beginning services.
- Review of other funding you have secured or are currently seeking and anticipated revenue sources to sustain the program (including anticipated payer mix, if relevant).

The Program Officer will take notes during the conversation, capturing answers to the questions above, and share them with the clinic team after the call. The clinic team may revise these notes as needed to clarify aspects of the proposal and submit them as the project narrative form, as described below.

Application

All applicants must complete an online application; the link will be shared by the Program Officer after your scheduled consultation conversation. Within the application, you will be asked to provide basic organizational information, and upload a completed project [budget](#) and the consultation notes you receive from the Program Officer, with any necessary additions or edits that clarify their responses to the questions above. *Please note, the project expenses section of the budget should clearly indicate where the funds requested from this opportunity would be allocated.*

Funding Approval and Grant Payment

After the submission deadline, applications will be reviewed by representatives from Blue Cross NC Foundation and an external partner. Applicants will be notified whether their work is approved for funding by June 2024.

Those approved for funding will receive a written acknowledgement that funds have been approved pending all grant requirements being met, including confirmation of raising or acquiring the remainder of the project budget and the commitment of a dentist. A grant agreement will be executed, and

funding will be dispersed once the total project budget has been secured and a dentist has committed to work in the program.

Approved projects will track the following outcomes to report on at the end of the grant period:

- Number of unique patients served.
- Number of unique encounters.
- Difference in patient capacity pre- and post-project launch.

Additionally, we are interested in learning more about the trends in treatment plan completion, caries at recall, and broken appointment data at clinics opened or expanded in high-need areas. We will discuss the trends in these data points with grantees as clinic-launch timing allows.

Timeline

Deadline or Activity	Date(s)
Funding Opportunity Posted	March 20, 2024
Foundation staff available for consultation	March 25 – April 12, 2024
Applications due	April 19, 2024
Response to Application from the Foundation	June 2024

Questions

For questions about this funding initiative, contact Daijah Street Davis at daijah.davis@bcbsncfoundation.org.

For questions about the application submission process or to discuss alternate submission arrangements other than the Foundation’s online application portal, contact Casey Lieber at casey.lieber@bcbsncfoundation.org.

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 \$220 million into North Carolina through more than 1,400 grants, collaborations, and special initiatives. Within its focus areas of access to care, 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.