

Blue Fund Program Guidelines and Important Dates 2024 Competitive Grant Cycle

Our focus

Highmark Blue Shield of Northeastern New York is committed to eliminating health disparities while improving the health, wellness and resilience of families, individuals, and communities in our region. We're looking to partner strategically with nonprofits that are improving racial and health equity by supporting under-resourced communities with poor social determinants of health.

Proposals must address at least one of the following health areas: cardiovascular health, behavioral health, health care workforce development, healthy children, and maternal health.

Process and funding priorities

- Blue Fund has a two-step grant application process. Applicants must submit a brief letter of intent (LOI) using Blue Fund's online application system in accordance with the published timeline.
- Selected applicants will be invited to submit a full application.
- Blue Fund will consider grant requests that will improve racial and health equity and address at least one or more of the following health focus areas: behavioral health, cardiovascular health, health-care workforce development, healthy children, and maternal health. Please refer to terms and definitions on page 4.
- Proposals for funding may include requests to support capital and/or program-related project costs. If a capital campaign request, must be 75% to goal.
- Applicants should demonstrate how the proposal will deepen and broaden current work, facilitate the expansion of an effective program, or create a new program based on the success of earlier work or evidence-based best practices.
- Proposals MUST be submitted electronically using the online application system before the deadline. No hard copy, emailed, or PDF applications will be accepted.
- Performance tracking and reporting will be required using our online system.

Eligibility

- The proposed work must serve or be located in one or more of the following counties of the Capital Region: Albany, Clinton, Columbia, Essex, Fulton, Greene, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Warren, and Washington.
- Your organization must be classified as a tax-exempt nonprofit under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code or an educational or government entity with tax-exempt status.
- Each applicant organization may submit no more than one LOI maximum.
- Organizations that have an active Blue Fund grant are not eligible to apply for funding during this cycle.
- Grants may provide support to eligible organizations and projects for up to three years depending on project/program design, scale, and budget.

Funding amounts and budget

- Minimum grant request is \$100,000; maximum grant request is \$300,000.
- Applicants may request up to 15% of the grant amount for indirect costs.
- Expenses incurred prior to submission of a Blue Fund application should not be included in Blue Fund project budgets; they are not eligible for payment or reimbursement. The proposed project or program should not begin, and expenses should not be incurred, before a funding decision has been communicated by Blue Fund to the applicant.
- Blue Fund reserves the right to pay grants in a single installment or in multiple disbursements.

Performance and reporting

- Grantees must have the capacity to track performance and report measurable outcome results as agreed upon by Blue Fund on a regular and timely basis.
- Blue Fund reserves the right to conduct an independent evaluation of grant expenditures for up to four years. The grantee agrees to provide the information necessary to complete such an evaluation. Failure to submit requested information in a timely fashion may obligate the grantee to refund the grant.
- The failure of an applicant to properly close out a grant in a timely manner will be a factor when considering new grant applications.

What we do not fund

- Efforts that do not align with one or more Blue Fund health focus areas
- Political campaigns or exclusively religious activities
- Attendance at or sponsorship of fundraising events for organizations
- Annual events or festivals
- The use of grant funds for purposes not preapproved by Blue Fund or not supported through required documentation

Media and public announcements

Highmark Blue Shield of NENY reserves the right to review and approve any use of the Blue Fund logo or program name and all public outreach and announcements related to the grant-supported project or initiative including but not limited to brochures, flyers, press releases, reports, articles, media engagement, brochures, and groundbreaking and ribbon events.

Important dates

LOI submissions due:	March 18, 2024 by 4pm. Submissions must be sent electronically using the online application system. Hard copy, emailed, or PDF LOI will not be accepted.
Selected organizations notified to submit full applications:	May 2024
Funding decisions announced:	Fall 2024

Questions

Michael Ball, Vice President, Community Affairs, Michael.Ball@highmark.com

Krista Ehasz, Senior Community Affairs Relationship Coordinator, Krista.Ehasz@highmark.com

Terms and Definitions

2024 Blue Fund Application

Health Equity: Health equity is when everyone has the opportunity to be as healthy as possible.

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/features/reach-health-equity/index.html>

“Health equity means that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care.”

<https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2017/05/what-is-health-equity-.html>

Health Disparities: Health disparities are differences in health outcomes and their causes among groups of people. Many health disparities are related to social determinants of health, the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. Identification and awareness of differences among populations regarding health determinants and health outcomes are essential steps toward reducing health disparities.

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/features/reach-health-equity/index.html>

Racial Equity: **Racial equity** is a process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone. It is the intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color.

<https://www.raceforward.org/about/what-is-racial-equity-key-concepts>