



Connecting Consumers with Care 2011 Grant Guidelines

Program Goal

The *Connecting Consumers with Care* grant program will provide two-year grants to Massachusetts community-based organizations, community health centers and select hospital-based programs. The goal is to help consumers enroll in and maintain access to coverage, collaborate with advocacy organizations to address system-level barriers, and educate and equip consumers to utilize the health care system more effectively and appropriately.

Context

Massachusetts has had unprecedented success in passing and implementing health care reform. Numerous community organizations have contributed significantly to outreach and enrollment efforts that have helped over 401,000 residents obtain coverage and access benefits since 2006. Furthermore, these organizations have been pivotal in conveying information about a complex law and explaining its impact to residents. This work has been carried out in the context of barriers to care that include lack of transportation, linguistic and cultural differences, affordability, provider shortages and medical debt.

For a variety of reasons, enrollment assistance continues to be needed. For those who have obtained coverage, the application process can be complex and burdensome, and the annual redetermination process can pose a barrier to ensuring continuity of coverage. As unemployment levels rose in recent years, individuals began relying on publicly supported health coverage programs after losing employer-sponsored insurance, which has meant new middle-income individuals seeking help from enrollment assistance service providers for the first time. And there continue to be populations who do not meet eligibility criteria and remain uninsured. Despite the fact that the state continues to face fiscal challenges that contribute to uncertainty both on programmatic and individual levels, there is an opportunity to deploy the knowledge and abilities of enrollment assistance providers to improve the system. As Massachusetts turns its attention to the implementation of the *Affordable Care Act* and begins to address health care affordability, the work of outreach and enrollment can also help to streamline access to coverage and ensure that consumers are prepared to appropriately access health care.

With this refocused grant opportunity, the Foundation seeks to provide programmatic support to organizations that can protect access to and minimize gaps in coverage for residents. This grant program will enhance the ability of grantee organizations to undertake specific efforts to enable consumers to effectively and appropriately access the health care system and emphasize grantee collaboration with the advocacy community to help improve the system of public coverage programs in Massachusetts.

Key Program Elements

Connecting Consumers with Care emphasizes a strong Massachusetts tradition of collaborative problem solving to support consumers in securing health coverage and services, while seeking to improve the broader systems made up of coverage programs. This grant program supports organizations that will provide: comprehensive outreach and enrollment services (including targeted outreach, enrollment assistance, redetermination support, and post-enrollment assistance to obtain needed care); an enhanced approach to educating consumers on effective navigation of the health care system; and strategic collaboration with the advocacy community to identify and address systems-level barriers that prevent consumers from easily accessing coverage and care.

Key activities include:

- Culturally competent outreach and enrollment efforts to assist individuals in obtaining and maintaining health insurance coverage and benefits, with a focus on individuals who remain uninsured or experience gaps in coverage.

- ❑ Educating consumers to increase their ability to navigate the health care system with minimal dependence on grantee organizations, and to ensure that access to care is accomplished in the most efficient manner that meets clients' needs. The development of sustainable strategies or a training curriculum is encouraged.
- ❑ Identifying systems-level barriers that create difficulty for consumers trying to access coverage or care. These might include complex notices or difficulty in connecting with state programs on behalf of clients. Grantees are encouraged to identify strategic ways to work with members of the advocacy community and implement solutions to these barriers with the appropriate state agencies.
- ❑ Participation in the Massachusetts Health Care Training Forum and other forums to facilitate communication between community health worker programs and state agencies responsible for health access programs.
- ❑ Participation in grantee convenings and timely reporting on project activities as requested by the Foundation.

Eligible Applicants and Selection Criteria

Funding requests are invited from organizations with experience assisting consumers with health coverage eligibility and enrollment processes. Applicants should also be able to demonstrate their plans for effectively training consumers to navigate the health care system in a self-sufficient manner and willingness to collaborate with the advocacy community.

Selection criteria include:

- ❑ Description of target population for culturally competent outreach and educational efforts.
- ❑ History of providing enrollment assistance and redetermination support for health coverage programs.
- ❑ Evidence of effectiveness in collaborative problem-solving involving community partners, providers, and state programs.
- ❑ Demonstrated capacity for developing educational curriculum or strategies for consumers on navigating the health care system.
- ❑ Demonstrated capacity for documenting programmatic achievement and sharing lessons learned.
- ❑ Demonstrated capacity for accurately tracking clients and reporting data for program evaluation purposes.
- ❑ Demonstrated capacity for utilizing electronic application methods, such as the Virtual Gateway or HelpEngen.
- ❑ Demonstrated capacity for fiscal accountability.
- ❑ Evidence of sustainability and opportunities for replication.

Funding

The maximum grant amount is \$40,000 per year for two years. Organizations currently funded within *Connecting Consumers with Care* are eligible to apply for funding according to the terms and processes described in these guidelines. However, prior funding does not guarantee a future award. Hospital-based programs must indicate matching financial support from the hospital beyond in-kind contributions. Organizations may not seek concurrent funding from the Foundation's *Strengthening the Voice for Access* grant program area.

Deadlines and Submission Requirements

Letter of Inquiry due June 10, 2011

Only for organizations not currently funded in this program area: An original and six copies of a two-page pre-proposal Letter of Inquiry (LOI) briefly describing the project to determine suitability for funding are due by 5:00 p.m. **Please use the required LOI Form**, which is available to download at www.bluecrossfoundation.org. LOIs should be submitted by mail. **Please do not submit attachments or support materials with the LOI.**

*The Foundation will acknowledge receipt of the LOI within three business days. Please contact the Foundation **only** if you have not received confirmation after three business days of submission.*

June 30, 2011

Organizations being invited to submit a full proposal will be contacted.

Proposal due July 22, 2011

Only for current grantees and organizations whose LOIs have been accepted and are invited to apply: Seven collated stapled sets of the core materials and one set of attachments as listed below must be **received via mail by 5:00 p.m.**

The Foundation will acknowledge receipt of the proposal packet within three business days. Only complete proposal packets, including all letters of support, will be considered for funding. Unsolicited proposals will not be considered, and will be returned without being evaluated.

September 2011 Grant awards announced.

Proposal Requirements

All Full Proposals: *Submit seven collated stapled copies of the core materials and one set of attachments, as listed below.*

Core Materials:

I. Proposal Summary Form: available for download from www.bluecrossfoundation.org.

II. Narrative: (must not exceed 10 pages, 11-12 pt. type on plain paper with one-inch margins)

a) Program Funding Request:

- Describe the organization's history and mission.
- Describe the target population, including the number, profile and geographic area(s) for the persons served.
- Describe the goals, objectives, program design and implementation plan for addressing the key program activities describe above.
- Describe why your organization and staff is best qualified to manage the project for which funding is being sought (please do not include staff resumes).
- Describe your organization's history in the outreach and enrollment field, including past experience with application and redetermination assistance.
- Describe your organization's history of engaging in collaborative problem solving, particularly with the advocacy community and state agencies responsible for administering state programs.
- Describe your organization's proposal for training and educating consumers to navigate the health care system on their own, or with minimal support.

b) Evaluation and Sustainability: Define your criteria for success with this program and how you will measure it. Describe any tools and strategies for measuring outcomes and effectiveness. If your program has developed a Logic Model, please include this in the proposal packet. Describe how the organization intends to sustain the program when this funding ends.

III. Project Budget Worksheet: Utilizing the form available for download at www.bluecrossfoundation.org, include an annual budget for the funding being requested.

IV. Organization Budget: Board or department-approved budget for the year in which funding is being requested.

V. Letters of Support: A minimum of three letters of support and confirmation of collaboration that illustrates your organization's capacity for making a measurable impact on the issue to be addressed by this program.

Attachments:

- **Current IRS letter confirming tax exempt status: 501(c)(3), 509(a).**
- **Most recent independent financial audits or accounts review.**
- **Hospitals are required to submit the most recent Community Benefits Report.**

Foundation staff are available to answer questions from applicants by prior to submission of the Letter of Inquiry or Proposal. Please contact us at 617-246-3509 to schedule a technical assistance call prior to the submission deadline. The Foundation will notify all applicants of the funding decisions before October 1, 2011.

Mailing or courier location

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation
Landmark Center
401 Park Drive, 4th Floor East
Boston, MA 02215