



Strengthening the Voice for Access **2011 Grant Guidelines**

Program Goal

The *Strengthening the Voice for Access* grant program will provide two years of core operating support to Massachusetts organizations whose mission and activities focus significantly on promoting the health care interests Massachusetts residents through strategic advocacy. The goal is to strengthen community-based policy activities, increase citizen participation in public policy development, and promote collaboration among statewide policy and advocacy organizations on two key health access priorities: ensuring health care coverage for vulnerable populations and addressing the issue of health care affordability.

Context

Effective advocacy, including coalition-building and collaborative problem solving, by health care advocacy organizations has greatly contributed to Massachusetts' national leadership in health access. Over the years, health advocacy organizations have helped ensure that the needs of the uninsured and underserved are given meaningful consideration as health care policy solutions are developed and implemented. Health advocacy organizations played instrumental roles in the design and implementation of the health reforms included in Chapter 58 of the Acts of 2006, resulting in the lowest rate of uninsurance in the nation and the modeling of innovative concepts such as the individual mandate. Those groundbreaking health reforms improved upon previous health policy accomplishments, also influenced by advocates, including the development of the Uncompensated Care Pool (now the Health Safety Net) and the Children's Medical Security Plan, the enactment of medical interpreter legislation, and statewide standards for hospital community benefits reporting.

Efforts to improve the Massachusetts health care system continue to evolve in response to new and ongoing challenges. Currently, fiscal constraints threaten the state's ability to provide a robust and accessible set of coverage options for low-income individuals and families. Furthermore, reducing the unsustainable rate of health care cost growth has emerged as a top priority for public officials, employers, and other key stakeholders. The urgency to address health care affordability has created a new opportunity for health care reforms, many of which are likely to broadly impact the health care system in Massachusetts.

With this refocused grant opportunity, the Foundation seeks to provide general operating support to key organizations that can engage in health policy discussions and represent the interests of vulnerable populations. This support will enhance the grantee organizations' ability to address issues of coverage and affordability through insightful analysis, the development of strategic and creative advocacy, and collaborative problem-solving.

Key Funding Objectives

The Foundation has identified two strategic priorities for its support of health care advocacy: health care coverage for vulnerable populations and the issue of health care affordability. By providing core operating support the Foundation seeks to enable Massachusetts advocacy organizations to maintain and expand organizational capacity focused on these two priorities.

Key activities include:

- Policy analysis and education
- Development of advocacy strategy focused on coverage and affordability
- Education and organizing to increase participation in the public policy process by consumers and other voices that can contribute to addressing coverage and affordability issues.
- Collaboration with other interest groups and policymakers

Eligible Applicants and Selection Criteria

The Foundation seeks to partner with key advocacy organizations who can be strategic and effective advocates on the topics of health care coverage and affordability. These grants will support statewide organizations and initiatives aligned with these priorities.

Selection criteria include:

- ❑ Organizations that are based in Massachusetts with a statewide focus.
- ❑ Demonstrated experience developing and promoting strategies to improve and sustain health care access for vulnerable populations across Massachusetts.
- ❑ Demonstrated capacity for bringing innovative thinking and new partnerships to the work of health care coverage and affordability.
- ❑ Willingness to participate in meetings organized by the Foundation to promote the sharing of resources and innovative solutions among grantees and health care leaders.
- ❑ Ability to utilize funding for bridging the gap between needs for specific programs and support for daily administrative and infrastructure costs.

Funding

The maximum grant amount for core operating support is \$75,000 per year for two years, with the possibility of renewal. Organizations currently funded within *Strengthening the Voice for Access* 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. Organizations may not seek concurrent funding from the Foundation's *Connecting Consumers with Care* grant program area.

The Foundation defines core operating support as funding for regular, ongoing expenses that are central to the organization's mission to expand access to health care in Massachusetts. These funds can be used for organizational infrastructure expenses such as: salaries for key program or administrative staff; support in planning, staff training or board development; general operating expenses; or for a specific health care advocacy initiative.

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 Foundation's 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 seeking renewal 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 a complete proposal packet, 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 following Board votes.

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 Cover 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) **Operating Support 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, and strategy to promote change.
 - Describe how this request addresses the Key Funding Objectives outlined above.
 - Describe why your organization and staff is best qualified to manage the efforts for which funding is being sought (please do not include staff resumes).
 - Describe your organization’s capacity for engaging in collaborative problem solving and organizing consumer involvement as part of a comprehensive advocacy strategy.
 - b) **Evaluation and Sustainability:** Define your criteria for success and how it will be measured. Describe the tools and strategies for measuring progress towards outcomes and effectiveness. If your organization has developed a Logic Model, please feel free to include this in the proposal packet. Describe how the organization intends to sustain these efforts when this funding ends.
- III. **Project Budget Worksheet:** Utilizing the form available for download from the web site, 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 any collaboration that illustrates your organization’s capacity for making a measurable impact on the issue to be addressed by receiving this grant.

Attachments:

- **Current IRS letter confirming tax exempt status: 501(c)(3), 509 (a).**
- **Most recent independent financial audits or accounts review.**

Foundation staff are available to answer questions from applicants prior to submission of the Letter of Inquiry or proposal. Please contact us at 617-246-5434 to schedule a technical assistance call prior to the submission deadline. In addition, 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