

The Community Health Fund's Grant Programs

Building Bridges to Better Health

Our Grantmaking Mission

We carry out a unique function for not-for-profit John Muir Health: distributing grants to nonprofit organizations whose missions are to improve the health and well-being of uninsured, underinsured, underserved, and vulnerable people of all ages most at risk for poor health living in central and east Contra Costa County.

More specifically, we fund health initiatives conducted by community-based, nonprofit organizations whose programs and collaborations address current and emerging health care needs and gaps in services in two ways: (1) by providing high quality affordable primary and specialty care, dental care, and behavioral health care; and (2) by offering innovative wellness and supportive programs that enable people to stay active, socially engaged, and healthy.

What We Fund: Health Initiatives

Why Health Initiatives

We have chosen the strategy of supporting and funding health initiatives on the premise that increasing access to current health care and wellness services as well as responding to gaps in services requires actions that go beyond relying on the status quo in existing health care. This kind of change calls for new strategies, a new vision, a commitment to doing something different, and a commitment to sustaining the change. The challenges associated with change processes are what our funding can help organizations take on.

Components of an Initiative

Over the years, we have learned what constitutes a successful health initiative: an innovative idea for needed change, a written plan of action for implementing change, and a professional process for evaluating and documenting progress, results and efficacy of strategies. Thus, the scope of our funding, which includes support from planning and evaluation experts, spans four complementary components of an initiative:

- Exploring a need for change and formulating a practical vision for making it happen
- Developing a written plan of action for achieving the health improvements envisioned
- Implementing the plan of action for a defined period of time to achieve documented results, prove its value, and attract other sources of sustaining income
- Conducting a professional evaluation of the planning and implementing stages that assesses and documents actions taken, results achieved, and strategies utilized

Identifying the Appropriate Setting for a Health Initiative

When a health initiative is best planned, implemented, and evaluated within a single organization, we will fund that organization's efforts. When pervasive barriers that adversely affect health status require two or more organizations to collaborate and create an interagency continuum of care, our funding will support the collaborators through planning, implementation, and evaluation stages.

Our Funding Process

Our funding process is a search for organizational partners who share our mission of breaking down barriers that limit access to health care and developing new forms of care when needed. Our “search process” does not start with a proposal; it is instead a series of discussions intended to identify visionary leadership, strategies for health initiatives and key players. Taking into consideration an array of readiness factors, the CHF will tailor a timetable for discussions and actions that can lead to formulating and funding a health initiative.

Our Health Initiative Grant Programs

As of 2011, we fund health initiatives through two grant programs: *Health Care Legacies* and *Healthy Innovations*.

Health Care Legacies

To honor accomplishments from fourteen years of grantmaking, in 2011 the Community Health Fund established this grant program. Over the years the most valuable achievements derived from our funding have been the start-up and/or expansion of health care programs and services that are improving and maintaining the health status of uninsured, underinsured and underserved people of all ages to this present day. These legacies are what remain from some of the health initiatives we have funded; they include a continuum of cultural and linguistically sensitive breast cancer screening, treatment and supportive services; dental services for low income children; behavioral health integrated with primary care within community clinics; and the 17,000 square foot renovation of an expanded community clinic in Concord’s Monument Corridor.

The Board of Directors retired the Grant Program for Health Partnerships at the end of 2010, and replaced it with the Health Care Legacies Grant Program. This decision reflects our plain-spoken commitment to continuing support for health initiatives that result in lasting health care programs people need to stay healthy.

We want to learn how new or expanded health care programs could flourish through an initiative we could support. Among our highest priorities of interest within community clinics are plans for expanding, enhancing, and integrating primary care, specialty care, dental care, and behavioral health care. We are also interested in learning how some form of systems change initiative within a health care setting can lead to greater efficiencies in providing, integrating, and increasing access to care.

Healthy Innovations

The Healthy Innovations Grant Program replaces the Annual Grant Program the governing board made available for 2010. This new grant program extends our grantmaking into the diverse realm of wellness programs and supportive services, which include, but are not limited to, health education, adult day programs, case management, social support, healthy food and nutrition, in-home support for adults, and volunteer-driven transportation programs for home-bound seniors. The vast array of programs providing many of these services are important because they complement health care provided in clinical settings by addressing many other common human needs that help to keep people active, socially engaged, and healthy.

Many of these programs are characterized as the “safety net” for children, adults and seniors, and during the last few years these programs and services have endured a series of reductions in revenue from local and state governmental agencies that has frayed our

safety net. The organizations providing these services cannot all shift quickly or easily to other strategies like charging fees for services and increasing charitable contributions, and foundations are not set-up to sustain their work. Through this grant program we are open to learning how a healthy innovation grant could help to increase an organization's services in relation to growing demand while simultaneously helping the organization shift to more stable and sustainable income sources.

We think this characterization of innovations frames our rationale for the Healthy Innovations Grant Program: *Innovations by their nature are adapting solutions to conditions of uncertainty. So, if we want people to be innovative, they need to use a process that allows them to try out things, alter things, change things, get feedback, and adapt.*

Discussions Are the Path to Forming & Funding a Health Initiative

The first step in our process is to begin discussing ideas for a needed health initiative. Engaging in a discussion with the CHF doesn't require being prepared with a proposal, but we would like you to come prepared to share facts and circumstances that point to a need for action, your vision for what that action might entail, and why you and your organization would want, and are best suited, to lead an effort.

Together, our discussions will explore the feasibility for action, what it would take for your organization to achieve a state of readiness, who suitable collaborators might be, and how a written plan of action could be created.

Key Aspects of Our Funding Process

The only requirement we impose on a health initiative receiving yearly implementation and evaluation funding is that it starts and ends in one of our established 12-month grant periods: July 1 through June 30 or January 1 to December 31.

We don't, and can't, pre-determine how long it will take an organization's initiative to be ready for funding; therefore we do not have any "application or proposal" deadlines. Instead, you can count on the CHF staff to guide you through discussions right up to the point where we both agree that an initiative is ready for funding and it is time for you to document in a proposal how it will be conducted and the costs for implementation. Before reaching this point, we can assist you in obtaining, if needed, planning assistance to help you develop a written implementation plan of action and/or evaluation plan for the contemplated initiative.

We invite all inquiries, and will quickly schedule a meeting to discuss an organization's vision, capabilities, and strategies for improving the health and wellness of medically uninsured, underinsured, and underserved populations. Please contact the Community Health Fund's Program Officer at (925) 941-3100.