

# HEALTHY START 2020: INCREASING ACCESS TO QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

Applications due: Thursday, April 2, 2020, 1 p.m. Central Time

## INTRODUCTION

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation's mission is to make a healthy difference in communities by advancing health equity and improving conditions where people live, learn, work and play.

The Foundation focuses on the social determinants of health, which influence a full 40 percent of health outcomes. Focusing on the social determinants of health can reduce barriers and positively impact future health.

This funding opportunity is focused on early childhood care and education — a key social determinant of health. The connection between education and health is well established. What happens in the first five years of life closely correlates with lifelong health outcomes and health care expenses.

### *Landscape of Early Education and Care in Minnesota*

In 2018, more than 350,000 children from birth through age 5 lived in Minnesota, comprising 6 percent of the total population. Children age 4 and under are the most diverse segment of our population; 32 percent of our children are of color or indigenous, compared to 6 percent of our oldest residents (age 65+).<sup>1</sup> Minnesota doesn't offer "universal" early childhood care education, which is defined as eligibility for all children to enroll, regardless of income level. Where universal availability is offered, nearly all children who can enroll do so. Most children (75 percent) age 6 and under have parents in the workforce (about 310,000 children) and two-thirds of children are in some type of child care regularly.<sup>2</sup> It is estimated that at least 35,000 low-income children under age 5 lack access to quality early childhood care and education. Rural Minnesota, in particular, is burdened with extensive child care deserts — geographic areas where there are few, if any, options for quality early childhood care. In fact, Minnesota is among the worst in the country.<sup>3</sup>

### *Funding Opportunity Focus*

Our goal is to increase access to and quality of early childhood care and education. Our focus on health equity means that we fund projects that work to dismantle systems and change the conditions that prevent children of color and indigenous children, low-income children, and children in rural communities from accessing quality early childhood care and education. Strong applications will demonstrate their commitment to these aims.

The field of early childhood care and education is complex and dynamic. Our focus within this complex landscape is on funding projects that support child care providers. See our [Provider Supports Strategy Menu](#) for aligned strategies.

## ELIGIBILITY

The Foundation believes health equity is best achieved when the people experiencing inequities are meaningfully involved in setting priorities, generating solutions and implementing approaches. As a result, this grant opportunity seeks to fund organizations that can demonstrate how the populations affected by the health inequities their project plans to address are meaningfully engaged in all aspects of the proposed work. The Foundation has a particular interest in funding organizations that are led by the communities that will benefit from the work, and requests that applicants submit their leadership demographic form as a component of their application. This information helps inform our funding decisions.

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1. Kids Count Data Center. "Child Population by Race and Age Group in Minnesota, 2010–18." Annie E. Casey Foundation. <https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/8446-child-population-by-race-and-age-group?loc=1&loc=1#detailed/2/25/false/37,871,870,573,869,36,868,867,133/68,69,67,12,70,66,71/17077,17078>.

2. Minnesota Department of Human Services. "Understanding Licensed Child Care in Minnesota." 2016 Issue Brief. <https://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfservlet/Public/DHS-3790-ENG>.

3. Rasheed Malik, Katie Hamm, Maryam Adamu and Taryn Morrissey. "Child Care Deserts: An Analysis of Child Care Centers by ZIP Code in 8 States." Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2016/10/27/225703/child-care-deserts/>.

The Foundation welcomes applications that implement, continue or expand proven approaches, as well as those that develop and implement new models. Both new and existing efforts are eligible. Each organization may submit only one application for this funding opportunity. Fiscal sponsors may apply on behalf of other projects, as well as on behalf of their own project.

### Eligible organizations

- To be eligible, an organization must be classified by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt, nonprofit 501(c)(3) community-based organization located in, or serving, Minnesota communities.
- Native American communities and Tribal governments.
- The use of fiscal sponsors is permitted. *If you plan to use a fiscal sponsor, contact Janet Jablonske, operations manager, at (651) 662-7417.*

### Ineligible organizations

- Individuals.
- For-profit organizations.
- Private foundations.
- With the exception of Tribal entities, government agencies and units of government are not eligible to apply. Public schools, cities, counties and state agencies are considered units of government and are therefore not eligible to apply.
- Organizations that discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, citizenship status, age, disability, sexual orientation or veteran status.
- Organizations that require membership in certain religions or advance a particular religious faith. (Faith-based organizations are eligible if they welcome and serve all members of the community regardless of religious belief and have 501(c)(3) status.)

## APPLICATION PROCESS AND PREPARING YOUR APPLICATION

The application process has three steps:

- 1. Eligibility questionnaire.** All applicants will be prompted to complete an eligibility questionnaire at the start of the application process in the Foundation's [online grant-management system](#). Upon completing the eligibility questionnaire, applicants will either (1) be allowed to proceed with the full application, or (2) receive a message that their organization is not eligible to apply for this funding opportunity.
- 2. Full application.** Applications will be accepted until **1 p.m. Central Time, Thursday, April 2, 2020**. Applications must be completed through the Foundation's [online grant-management system](#). No other form or method of submission may be used.
- 3. Site visit.** Site visits will be scheduled only with applicants that are selected as finalists.

### Application questions

The chart below lists the application questions and highlights specific information you should include in your answers, in addition to responding to the core question. Your application will be evaluated on the responses you provide. The Foundation will also consider information provided on budget documents, the Leadership Demographic worksheet and the geographic distribution of grants.

Application question and word limits	Be sure to include
Please provide a two- to three-sentence summary of your application. [100-word limit]	Be concise and concrete.
Describe the opportunities and challenges your application addresses and your proposed solution. [1,000-word limit]	<p>Describe how your work will increase access to and quality of early childhood care and education.</p> <p>Describe how your effort will address elements of systems change (shifting the conditions that hold the problem in place) rather than solely providing direct services.</p> <p>Describe the population your proposed work is intended to benefit.</p>
How was the focus determined, and who was involved in that decision making process? [500-word limit]	Describe how the people most impacted by the proposed effort 1) were included in determining the focus of the application and 2) will continue to be involved in decision making throughout the lifecycle of the grant.
Describe your organization's capacity and relevant expertise. [500-word limit]	Include the organization's cultural competencies and experience working with the population that is expected to benefit from the proposed work.
Describe your goals and objectives for this project. [1,000-word limit]	Describe how the proposed goals and objectives will increase access to and quality of early childhood care and education.
Describe the specific activities for which you seek funding and who will carry out the activities. [500-word limit]	Describe how the proposed activities will achieve your goals and objectives.
How will this project advance health equity? [500-word limit]	Describe how the proposed effort will address inequities in early childhood care and education.
Describe how you will evaluate the work. What impact will you have? How will you measure? Who will be involved? [500-word limit]	<p>Describe the anticipated one- to two-year outcomes and how you will measure progress toward these outcomes.</p> <p>Describe what you anticipate will have changed as a result of the grant by the end of the grant period.</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> The Foundation is contracting with an external evaluator who will co-create evaluation plans with each funded organization and support data collection toward goals.</p>
If applicable, describe your strategies for sustaining this effort. (optional) [500-word limit]	
We invite you to provide any additional information here that will help us review your request. (optional) [1,000-word limit]	
Upload any additional attachments here that would be helpful for us as we review your request. (optional)	

## PROGRAM TIMELINE

Grant-funded activities are expected to begin on July 1, 2020. Grants awarded for a one-year grant period will conclude on June 30, 2021. Grants awarded for a two-year period will conclude on June 30, 2022.

## ASSISTANCE BEYOND THE GRANT

The Foundation is committed to our grantees' success. Grantees will be paired with a Foundation program officer who will work with you during the grant period on evaluation, communications and technical assistance. Grantees will work with their program officer to identify additional ways the Foundation can support your organization, which may include financial and nonfinancial supports. Grantees will be asked to participate in one all-grantee convening per year. When grantees attend Foundation activities or convenings, mileage and lodging expenses can be reimbursed directly for those traveling more than 100 miles round trip, and these expenses do not need to be included in the grant project budget.

## BUDGET INFORMATION

The Foundation expects to grant a total of up to \$550,000 in year one and an additional \$550,000 in year two. Applicants may apply for grants of up to \$100,000 per year and may apply for one- or two-year grants (up to \$100,000 each year). Organizations applying for two-year grants may request different amounts each year. Approval for the second year of funding is dependent on demonstrated progress toward goals in the first year. The Foundation does not have a preference related to one- or two-year grants.

Foundation grants cannot exceed 25 percent of the applicant organization's annual budget.

Each applicant must submit a detailed project budget and budget narrative and provide an organizational budget. You may submit your own budget form or use the Foundation's templates. Applicants invited for a site visit (the finalists) must provide their most recent audit (if audited) or most recent board-approved financials and the most recent IRS Form 990 in advance of the site visit.

### *Eligible use of funds*

- Project staff salaries and benefits
- Project costs, including but not limited to planning, activity costs, project-related equipment and supplies, and other project-related direct costs
- Indirect administrative costs for the grant budget cannot exceed 20 percent, including but not limited to general and organizational costs unrelated to the project you are requesting funding for, staff development and trainings, payroll processing or auditing costs, liability insurance, rent, utilities, equipment maintenance and indirect department salaries, such as salaries of personnel in human resources or accounting departments

### *Ineligible use of funds*

- Assistance for individuals, including scholarships
- Activities for specific religious purposes
- Clinical quality-improvement activities
- Biomedical research
- Back payroll taxes

- Building purchase, remodeling or furnishing of facilities, or other capital expenditures
- Direct health care services, including medical, dental and mental health
- Director and officers' insurance
- Equipment or travel, except as related to project activities
- Endowments, fundraising events or development campaigns
- Legal fees, including the cost of litigation or settlements, incurred by grantees
- Retiring debt or covering deficits
- Payment of services or benefits reimbursable from other sources
- Vehicle purchase

### *Lobbying restrictions*

As required by the Internal Revenue Code, the Foundation will not fund attempts to influence specific pending or proposed legislation, including referenda, local ordinances and resolutions. This prohibition generally includes direct lobbying of legislators and other government officials with respect to specific legislation and mass media advertising campaigns aimed at influencing specific legislation.

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**PLEASE NOTE:** Blue Cross' [Center for Prevention](#) focuses on commercial tobacco use, physical activity and healthy eating; therefore, applications focused primarily on those issues are **not eligible** for funding under this funding opportunity. Learn more about the Center for Prevention's funding opportunities [here](#).

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## TIMELINE

February 3, 2020	Funding opportunity guidelines released; application process opens
Early February 2020	Informational webinar posted on <a href="#">website</a>
February 3–April 2, 2020	Foundation program staff available for phone inquiries and questions about funding opportunity
<b>Thursday, April 2, 2020</b>	<b>Application deadline, 1 p.m. Central Time</b>
April 29–30, 2020	Staff schedule site visits with finalist applicants; applicants not receiving a site-visit invitation will not continue in the process
Mid-May 2020	Applicants not selected for a site visit are notified by email
April 30–May 15, 2020	Site visits completed
Late June 2020	Announcement of grant awards
July 1, 2020	Expected start date for grantees

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

We encourage all applicants to carefully review this document and watch the informational webinar. Applicants are also welcome to call or email any of the following:

- Senior Program Officer Allison Corrado at [Allison.Corrado@bluecrossmnfoundation.org](mailto:Allison.Corrado@bluecrossmnfoundation.org) or (651) 662-4613
- Senior Program Officer Bilal Alkatout at [Bilal.Alkatout@bluecrossmnfoundation.org](mailto:Bilal.Alkatout@bluecrossmnfoundation.org) or (651) 662-2734
- Senior Program Officer Claire Chang at [Claire.Chang@bluecrossmnfoundation.org](mailto:Claire.Chang@bluecrossmnfoundation.org) or (651) 662-7416

For questions about the application process, please contact Operations Manager Janet Jablonske at [Janet.Jablonske@bluecrossmnfoundation.org](mailto:Janet.Jablonske@bluecrossmnfoundation.org) or (651) 662-7417.

## GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

**Access** — Supports that result in families' ability to enroll their children in early childhood care and education programs, including availability of quality early childhood care and education across the state.

**Early childhood care and education** — Often referred to as child care programs, both formal/licensed and informal/unlicensed.

**Health equity** — A state where all people can reach their highest level of health.

**Systems change** — Shifting the conditions that are holding the problem in place. Applications should address how their project fosters systems change rather than solely provides direct services.

**Quality** — Including but not limited to cultural context, parent engagement and promoting kindergarten-readiness practices, such as programs like Parent Aware ratings or accreditation.

**Young children or children** — 0–5 years old.

## RESOURCES

[Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Foundation website](#)

[Center for Rural Policy and Development: Child Care Report](#)

[Minnesota Compass: Early Childhood Overview](#)

[Parent Aware Fast Facts](#)

[Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: Early Childhood Is Critical to Health Equity](#)

[The Waters of Systems Change](#)

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