



## **FY16 Grant Funding Guidelines**

Each year, Blue Cross Blue Shield invests millions in communities where there are strong non-profits working diligently to improve the health and wellness for people in Illinois. We look forward to another year of community partnership. These guidelines have been created to help applicants better understand our funding priorities.

### **I. Our Commitment to Community Investment**

For more than 78 years, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Illinois (BCBSIL) has been supporting communities throughout Illinois by investing in non-profit direct service providers committed to improving the health and lives of people in Illinois. We know that the health and wellness of a community and its residents can be positively transformed when resources are directed to organizations with the knowledge and community presence to enhance access to care, address health disparities, and create innovative community-based coordinated care models.

As the largest and most experienced health insurance company in Illinois, we believe that health and wellness is essential to a fulfilling and productive life. Supporting individuals, families, and communities is core to our business and our philosophy. To do that, we direct resources- people, time, and dollars- to areas where there is need and there are community partners on the ground capable of creating meaningful change. These guidelines explain how we invest in Illinois communities through our direct service grants. Sponsorship information may be found on our [Community Investment page](#).

### **II. The Changing Health Landscape**

The implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) has brought about a historic shift, opening the doors to care for individuals and families who had previously lacked access. Today we have the opportunity to evolve to a more preventative, coordinated, and holistic approach to health, thereby improving outcomes for all Illinoisans.

In this funding cycle, BCBSIL is interested in innovative ways that health and human service providers are responding to emerging needs and opportunities for improving care, with attention to underserved populations that now have access to care; some of whom will experience health care for the first time in their lives.

For the underserved, health outcomes do not rest solely upon medical interventions, but are dependent upon basic needs being met, such as stable housing, food security, transportation and access to culturally competent providers. As providers and community organizations develop programs to facilitate and enhance care by addressing both healthcare and basic needs by bundling interventions and/or co-locating services at one site, BCBSIL is interested in learning what works. For example, some areas that we see the need to build additional community capacity and expertise include, but are not limited to:

- Integrating behavioral health and substance abuse services with physical health care
- Ensuring stable housing options and wrap around services for the homeless and special needs populations
- Providing culturally competent health education and health care services that reflect the knowledge of a specific population and its prevalent health needs to more effectively coordinate care and improve health outcomes

### III. Two Funding Streams: Healthy Kids, Healthy Families and Community Partners Grants

In Illinois, grants are awarded through two separate funding streams: *Healthy Kids*, *Healthy Families* and *Community Partners Grant*. Non-profit direct service providers may apply through either (but not both) funding stream. Funding is competitive, so organizations should assess alignment with each streams' funding priorities to determine which grant category best aligns with program objectives.

#### a. Healthy Kids, Healthy Families

Healthy Kids, Healthy Families (HKHF) grants focus on promoting the health and wellness of families with members spanning all ages, from children to seniors. Studies show that family and community support can positively impact one's physical and emotional well-being and reinforce healthy behaviors that maintain good health. We are interested in programs that successfully engage people in adopting healthy behaviors across one or more of the following areas:

- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Disease prevention and management
- Safe environments

#### b. Community Partners Grant

Community Partners Grants support innovative direct service programs dedicated to improving health system objectives in under-served communities in Illinois. Needs that emerge in communities are diverse; therefore, we are interested in how well local organizations uniquely understand the health needs of its constituents and develop and implement strategies to improve these conditions by:

- Improving health insurance and health condition literacy
- Increasing access to health care
- Enhancing care coordination
- Addressing behavioral and social determinants of health and health disparities

### IV. Our Grant Process

Each year, BCBSIL receives hundreds of applications for grant funding. We appreciate the time and resources that organizations dedicate to preparing proposals and understand that applying for funding can be an arduous process. There is very good work happening in our communities, which makes for an extremely competitive pool of applicants each cycle.

- **Online application:** Interested applicants must submit proposals online by the deadline listed on our Community Investment page. BCBSIL staff is available to provide technical assistance as needed. Late, incomplete, or paper copies of proposals are not accepted. **Links to online applications are posted on our [Community Investment page](#).**
- **Grant range:** The award range for CPG and HKHF grants is \$20,000-100,000. Program requests should stay within this range to be considered for BCBSIL funding.
- **1 year grants:** Funding is for one year only and commences July 1, 2015 for 12 months. There is not an automatic renewal funding for previously funded organizations. Organizations must submit new proposals each year.
- **Grant selection:** Proposals are evaluated by a grants committee with final funding approvals made by the BCBSIL Affiliate Board. All funding decisions are final.
- **Reporting:** Grantees must comply with BCBSIL annual reporting requirements and provide data upon request as needed. Failure to do so may jeopardize funding.
- **Key dates:**
  - March 2, 2015: Application opens
  - March 30, 2015: Application closes
  - Mid-June: All applicants notified of final funding decisions
  - July 1, 2015: Funding commences

**V. How We Review Grants:** All proposals are reviewed and evaluated to determine basic eligibility, alignment with BCBSIL strategies, program quality, and organizational capabilities. We define these criteria in the following ways:

**a) Basic Eligibility:** All organizations must meet the following criteria to be considered for a grant from BCBSIL:

- Services provided in the state of Illinois
- Incorporated as a not-for-profit organization and has been delivering services for at least 1 year at the time of application submission
- Established as a 501(c)3 and in compliance with federal and state regulations and requirements
- Operates under a non-discrimination policy
- Governed by an all-volunteer Board of Directors in which Board members are not compensated for service

**b) Alignment with HKHF or CPG Strategy:** Programming must align with the objectives of Healthy Kids, Healthy Families or Community Partners Grants as explained above. BCBSIL does not provide grants outside of these funding streams.

**c) Program Quality:** We look for high quality programs that align with our community investment strategy and have the potential for positive impact in their communities. For BCBSIL, high quality programming is demonstrated by the following characteristics:

- **Collaboration:** No one organization can do everything on its own and the challenges facing under-resourced communities demand partnerships across service providers. Providers respond to local needs by creating networks of support through a variety of way (referrals, service integration, advocacy, etc.). Role within those partnerships is explained.
- **Data Collection and Continuous Quality Improvement:** Programs have a consistent plan of evaluation that includes tools and methods to measure the efficacy of its services. Information is used to demonstrate effectiveness, improve services, and share learnings.
- **Outcome Performance and Reporting:** Programs have capacity to track performance and report measurable outcome results on a regular and timely basis.
- **Community Presence & Engagement:** Organizations have experience with the population served and are recognized within the community as a credible partner. Organization engages community members and clients in identifying issues and ways to best meet those needs.
- **Evidence-based and Innovative Service Delivery:** Programs offer services that are grounded in clinical expertise and promising practices; programming is adjusted when necessary to improve care and/or respond to emerging needs or opportunities.
- **Strength-based Approach:** Programs partner with and serve clients and communities from an asset-focused approach. The strengths of individuals and the local community are recognized and leveraged as valuable components to meeting goals.
- **Financial Fitness:** Organizations must have sound financial standing and the capacity to deliver all services as proposed, retain necessary credentialing for service delivery, and meet BCBSIL reporting requirements. Programs should have a diverse portfolio of funding or present a plan for seeking funding from other sources.

## **VI. What We Do Not Fund**

Under its granting process, BCBSIL can only fund 501(c)3 organizations serving Illinois. BCBSIL also does not grant to the following:

- Organizations that do not meet basic eligibility criteria
- Organizations that discriminate based on race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status
- Grants to individuals
- Programs that are exclusively arts and culture
- Political campaigns or exclusively religious activities
- Government agencies
- Capital campaigns

We thank you for considering BCBSIL as a supporter of your work and community. Questions about the application process for grant funding or sponsorships may be directed to Kathleen Cangemi (Kathleen\_cangemi@bcbsil.com).