

Fiscal Year 2025 Blue ImpactSM Grant Funding Guidelines

For more than 80 years, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois (BCBSIL) has supported communities throughout the state by investing in nonprofit organizations committed to improving the health and wellness of Illinois residents. We know that directing resources (people, time, and dollars) to organizations with the expertise and community presence to increase access to care, address health disparities and create innovative community-based coordinated care models can positively transform communities and its people.

The following guidelines explain how BCBSIL will invest in Illinois communities through our grant programs based on our funding priorities for fiscal year 2025 (FY25) – July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025. Sponsorship information may be found on the [Grant and Sponsorship Programs](#) page of our [bcbsil.com](#) website.

I. Focus

BCBSIL is committed to understanding the social, economic, and behavioral drivers of health, not only in clinical settings, but the myriad factors that address community-wide, population-level health issues and improve health outcomes. We are interested in the innovative ways that health and human service providers are responding to health needs, improving access and overall health equity in divested communities throughout the state. Health outcomes do not rest solely upon medical interventions; they also depend upon basic needs and the social determinants of health (SDoH) - including housing stabilization and support, education, food security, safety and anti-violence measures, employment, transportation, and access to culturally competent healthcare providers – all of which, either facilitate health benefits or create challenges to the quality of life for individuals, families, and entire communities.

II. Blue ImpactSM Approach

Following the learnings garnered from our previous years of community partnerships and meaningful community investments, BCBSIL remains committed and aligned with [Healthy People 2030](#) and its national objectives to improve health and well-being and advance health equity.

The Blue ImpactSM grant program is our community investment strategy, which focuses on the social determinants of health to directly target the social and economic factors that play a role in health and wellness. BCBSIL is interested in learning how local organizations understand the health needs of its constituents to develop and implement strategies to improve those conditions and reduce the disparities, racial injustice and the social conditions that impact health outcomes. BCBSIL will consider providing grants to nonprofit organizations that focus on:

- **Economic Opportunity and Stability:** Addressing issues such as poverty, removing barriers to employment, providing good jobs and upskilling.
- **Nutrition:** Supporting efforts to decrease hunger and increase access to nutritious food.
- **Neighborhood and Built Environment:** Focusing on affordable healthy housing, access to transportation, safe outdoor spaces, and access to physical activity.
- **Locally Defined Health Solutions:** Addressing hyperlocal health and human service needs, community collaborations that improve community wellbeing, interrupt violence, or build peaceful communities.

- **Optimal Health Outcomes:** Helping close gaps in care, specifically around six priority areas: immunizations, diabetes care, cardiovascular care, behavioral health, early detection cancer screening and maternal and infant health.

III. Grant Application Process

Each year, BCBSIL receives hundreds of proposals for grant funding, reflecting the excellent work happening in our communities. This results in a highly competitive pool of applicants. At the same time, we appreciate the valuable time and resources that organizations dedicate to preparing grant applications. Therefore, to assure the best use of our applicants' resources, we have a two-step process beginning with a Letter of Interest (LOI), followed by an invitation to apply. **Only one LOI may be submitted per organization, which should include reference to all programs the grant should be considered for.** We will not accept multiple LOIs for multiple programs from one organization.

- **Step 1 - Letter of Interest:** This is the opportunity for interested applicants to submit an abbreviated proposal online. Those that are selected to progress to the next phase of the application process will be invited to submit a full application. The link to the LOI is posted on the [Grant and Sponsorship Programs](#) page.
- **Step 2 - Invitation-only Application:** Following review of Letters of Interest, select applicants will be invited to submit a full application online. BCBSIL staff will notify invited applicants and provide technical assistance. Late, incomplete, or paper copies of proposals will not be accepted.

Grant Range: Awarded grants range from \$25,000 to \$100,000. Requests should stay within this range to be considered for funding.

Grant Term: In most cases, funding is for one year (12 months), commencing on July 1st through June 30th of the following year. There is no automatic renewal funding for previously funded organizations. However, based on performance, BCBSIL may consider renewing an existing grant for a multi-year commitment.

Reporting: Grantees must comply with BCBSIL annual reporting requirements and provide data upon request. Failure to do so may jeopardize funding.

Key Dates: Process dates for the FY25 grant application process will be posted on the [Grant and Sponsorship Programs](#) page.

IV. Application Review Process

All submissions (LOI and full applications) are evaluated to determine basic eligibility, alignment with BCBSIL strategies and priorities, 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:
- a. Services provided in the state of Illinois
 - b. Incorporated as a not-for-profit organization and has been delivering services for at least one year at the time of application submission
 - c. Established as a 501(c)(3) and in compliance with federal and state regulations and requirements
 - d. Operates under a non-discrimination policy
 - e. Governed by an all-volunteer Board of Directors in which Board members are not compensated for service

- B. Alignment with BCBSIL Strategy:** Programming must align with the BCBSIL Blue Impact Fund. BCBSIL does not provide grants outside of this funding stream.
- C. Program Quality and Organizational Capabilities:** BCBSIL looks for high quality programs that align with our community investment strategy and have the potential for positive and sustainable impacts in their communities. High quality programming is demonstrated by the following characteristics:
- a. **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 expertise and support (e.g., referrals, service integration, advocacy, etc.). Roles within these partnerships should be clearly defined.
 - b. **Data Collection and Continuous Quality Improvement:** Programs have a consistent plan of evaluation that includes tools and methods to measure the efficacy of their services. Resulting Information/data is used to demonstrate effectiveness, improve services, and share learnings.
 - c. **Outcome Performance and Reporting:** Programs have the capacity to track performance and report measurable outcome results on a regular and timely basis.
 - d. **Community Presence & Engagement:** Organizations have experience with the population/community served and are recognized within the community as a credible partner. Organization engages community members and clients in identifying issues and ways to best create positive, collaborative change.
 - e. **Concept & Evidence-based Service Delivery:** Programs that raise new ideas are as important as those based upon clinical expertise. BCBSIL aims to support both, so long as programming is thoughtful, grounded and adjusted when indicated to improve care and/or respond to emerging needs or opportunities.
 - f. **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.
 - g. **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion:** Organizations have a commitment to diverse, equitable, and inclusive ideas, participation, and leadership. BCBSIL is interested in how this is a priority and practice for organizations working to improve health equity, access and wellbeing in local communities.
 - h. **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.

V. Ineligible Organizations

Under its granting process, BCBSIL can only fund 501(c)(3) organizations serving Illinois. BCBSIL does not provide grants to:

- 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, and/or military status
- Programs that are exclusively arts and culture
- Political campaigns or exclusively religious activities
- Government agencies
- Capital campaigns
- Animal welfare
- Grants to individuals

VI. Contact Us

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 Vivian Mikhail (vivian_mikhail@bcbsil.com).